The Leadership Conference Education Fund

GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGNS & ADVOCACY

a toolkit to help you make change happen

The Leadership Conference Education Fund

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The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights is a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States. The Leadership Conference works toward an America as good as its ideals.

The Leadership Conference Education Fund is a 501(c)(3) organization that builds public will for federal policies that promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States.

Access this material online at http://www.civilrights.org.

The Leadership Conference Education Fund

Dear Friend:

Motivated individuals and community organizations are the engines that drive successful movements. The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and The Leadership Conference Education Fund have produced this guide to provide you with useful tools for making change.

The Leadership Conference is a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to advance and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States. Through advocacy and outreach to targeted constituencies, The Leadership Conference works toward the goal of a more open and just society -- an America as good as its ideals. The Education Fund builds public will for federal policies that promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States. The Education Fund's campaigns empower and mobilize advocates around the country to push for progressive change in the United States.

Our founders shared a commitment to social justice and the firm conviction that the struggle for civil rights would be won, not by one group alone, but in coalition. They were right. While many marched in the streets, sat-in at lunch counters, and refused to ride in the back of the bus, The Leadership Conference worked to pass landmark federal legislation to protect the civil and human rights of all Americans. It has lobbied for and won the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1957, the Civil Rights Act of 1960, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Fair Housing Act of 1968, and also helped to organize one of the defining events of the 20th century —the 1963 March on Washington.

These laws transformed the nation, outlawing discrimination in nearly every facet of American life and made it more fair and equitable for all Americans. Over time, The Leadership Conference has grown in scope, membership, and influence. The coalition's achievements include the expansion of civil rights protections for people with disabilities, seniors, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans, and the restoration of core civil rights laws like the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act and the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act.

As The Leadership Conference and The Education Fund have grown, our reach has expanded to work with allies around the country to advance the vision our founders had more than 60 years ago: working together for an America that is true to its promise of equal justice and equal opportunity. We are proud to partner with individuals and community organizations that share our commitment to achieving that vision, and we hope you'll find this toolkit helpful in advancing that goal.

Wade Henderson
President and CEO
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The Leadership Conference Education Fund

The Leadership Conference Education Fund

Dear Friend:

This toolkit was put together with you in mind. Its purpose is to educate, equip, encourage, and empower you to make change.

Our goal is to provide you with the basic structure and strategies needed to plan and carry out an effective grassroots public education or advocacy campaign. It's possible to write an entire book on each of the areas covered in this toolkit—in fact, many have been written. But you don't have to read half a dozen books to put together a smart campaign.

What you need to do is establish your goals, create a strategy, make a step-by-step plan, and mobilize the people, partners, and resources to make it all achievable. This toolkit is meant to be a concise guide to accomplishing that. And we include plenty of suggested resources if you want more in-depth information.

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and The Leadership Conference Education Fund provide leadership and coordination to coalition efforts and support the work of national and local partners by providing strategic and technical assistance, preparing materials, offering training, and identifying resources to support coalition efforts. Information on training for grassroots advocacy is provided by The Leadership Conference; information relating to education and coalition building is provided by The Education Fund.

We believe in the power of coalitions to bring people together for a common purpose. History shows that change can be made when diverse voices unite around a shared goal. We hope you will consider us your partners in making needed change happen. You can learn more about our work at http://www.civilrights.org. You can also reach The Leadership Conference field staff at 202-466-3315 or at grassroots@civilrights.org.

Have fun!

Ellen Buchman
Vice President, Field Operations
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
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SETTING GOALS

The first step of any campaign is setting goals and identifying benchmarks toward achieving those goals. Once you know your destination you can begin to create a road map for getting there.

Sometimes this is easy. Some educational or advocacy campaigns can have a straightforward goal with clear steps to achieving it, such as getting a bill passed by the legislature and signed into law by the governor. Other campaigns might start with more general goals, such as educating the public about a certain issue or attracting media attention to an organization or campaign.

SMART Goals

Having explicit goals makes it easier to map out a strategy and to explain your campaign to potential supporters. One approach to setting and clarifying your goals is to use the acronym SMART. SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timed.

Specific

Being specific has several advantages. First, a specific goal makes it easier to determine the precise steps needed to achieve it. In addition, a specific goal is more measurable.

For example, "raising awareness" of an issue or "educating the public" about your organization are not very specific. Think about what would have to happen for you to consider the campaign a success. Even if you think your goal is obvious, try making it as specific as possible. Rather than "making public officials more accountable in our state," identify what you need to accomplish to make that a reality: for example, "The creation of a new office of ethics and accountability that meets these four standards . . ."

Measurable

Having measurable goals can help you recruit, retain, and motivate volunteers; evaluate your progress; and keep your campaign team on the same page. Clear and measurable goals can also help you raise funds for your campaign. Many funders want to be able to verify that their funds are being put to work successfully.

Some goals are easier to measure than others. If you're focused on changing a law or regulation, it's easy to know whether or not you're successful. If you're carrying out a public education campaign on an issue, you'll need to create some qualitative and quantitative measures of success. Do you want to speak to a dozen new potential coalition partners? Have a volunteer leader featured in the local paper? Give media training to 20 local leaders? Earn a certain number of mentions in specific media outlets? Double traffic to your website?

Some information is readily available. You can count increased traffic to your website, or the number of responses to an email. You can count the number of people who attend an educational forum or rally or who take part in an organized effort to educate lawmakers about an issue or piece of legislation.

You may be able to get other kinds of information with a little more work. Your campaign might benefit from access to data collected by public agencies. For example, if you are building support for a focused effort to reduce dropout rates in communities of color, you could demonstrate the need for your campaign by getting graduation rates for high schools from areas with different economic and demographic profiles and publicizing any clear disparities.

Achievable

Campaign goals must be achievable. A goal that feels achievable with hard work can motivate activists to sacrifice time and energy to help you accomplish it. A goal that seems unattainable or unbelievable may have the opposite effect; donors and volunteers are less likely to invest in what feels like an impossible quest.

Ask yourself if it is possible to accomplish the specific goals you are setting.

- Are there legal barriers to the change you want to make?
- Are your goals achievable given the political or cultural climate?
- Have others accomplished similar goals?

Realistic

A realistic goal and an achievable goal may sound like the same thing, and there's some overlap. But deciding whether your goal is realistic is less about the external environment and more about self-assessment. Among the kinds of questions you should ask:

- What kind of financial resources will the campaign require?
- Do you know where the money will come from? Can you identify likely sources of funding?
- Do your coalition partners have enough staff and volunteers to do what is needed?
- What are the competing demands for your time and energy? Will this campaign have a high enough priority to keep your coalition partners engaged?
- Are you likely to get support from influential community leaders?

Timed

Set deadlines. Assigning a time frame to your ultimate goal and to the major steps in your action plan will help you budget your time and money, and will give you a way to hold people accountable for responsibilities they have taken. You may not always make your deadlines, but having a timeline provides a valuable structure for the campaign.

Getting SMART

Here's an example of a goal that is noble, but not SMART:

> *To ensure that schools collect and report data on high school dropout rates so that we can better evaluate disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes.*

That may be a good way to describe the mission or purpose of an educational coalition, but the goal isn't specific or measurable enough to build a campaign around. Here's one way to make that a SMART goal:

> *To add a provision to the pending education bill before the end of this legislative session that would require high schools and state education departments to collect and report data on dropout rates that will permit comparisons between students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.*

This is specific, measurable, and time-framed. It's at least theoretically achievable, as long as the legislature is still in session. Figuring out if it's realistically achievable requires an honest assessment of your situation and resources.

With SMART goals in hand you are ready to think through your strategy and come up with an action plan. That plan will probably include a number of intermediate goals or objectives that will be stepping stones to your ultimate goal. Keep thinking SMART with each step you take.

obtain data to set goals and evaluate progress

You may set a goal that requires you to collect some data. For example, say you want to increase public support for immigration reform in your state by 20 percentage points over the next two years. You need to know where you stand at the beginning of the campaign. If there's no publicly available polling data, you might be able to partner with a polling unit at a university. You may also be able add a few questions to another survey, which would cost far less than commissioning your own poll.

If you're looking for government data, you may be required to fill out a written request under the federal Freedom of Information Act or your state's open records or "right to know" law. Information on using the federal FOIA is available from the First Amendment Center.

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DEVELOPING STRATEGY

Once you have clarified the goals and objectives of your campaign, it's time to work on a strategy that will get you there. Strategic planning is the bridge between setting your goals and taking action. Creating a strategic plan may sound intimidating, but it's just a process of thinking through and mapping out the steps it will take for you to achieve your objectives and reach your goals.

The strategies you identify for your campaign will determine which types of campaign tactics you use and how you deploy them. Some campaigns may depend on generating intense media attention or mobilizing a specific constituency. Other campaigns may depend more on working behind-the-scenes to influence key decision makers. There's no single campaign template. But there are a set of questions to ask that will help you prepare and implement a strategic plan.

It's a good idea to make strategic planning a small team project. Effective strategic planning is hard to do in a large group setting. Gather a few people who are committed to your goals, understand the climate you'll be working in, and know some of the important decision makers. This should be a small group of people who can work well together and who can trust each other with frank opinions and honest disagreements.

Ask the Right Questions

Developing a strategic campaign plan is a process of asking and answering a set of essential questions. As you ask and honestly answer these questions, you may find yourself needing to revise or clarify your goals as well as the important intermediate objectives.

Who are the decision makers?

Look at your goal(s) and identify the people and/or institutions that have the power to make the change you are seeking. If you're trying to win passage of a law at the state or federal level, identify the people who will determine whether or not you will succeed:

- Who is in the best position to introduce the measure?
- Which committee or committees will have to approve your bill or can include your provision in broader legislation?
- Who leads those committees?
- Who are the other influential committee members?
- Who has the credibility and influence to be an effective sponsor or public spokesperson for the measure?
- Which respected legislators can help you get a majority to support your bill?

And, of course, in a campaign focused on legislation, the governor or president will decide whether to sign or veto the law.

Your campaign might not be about a legislative change. You may, for example, want a state or federal agency to adopt a regulatory change. You may want to push an agency to do its job better—to more effectively enforce voting rights provisions, exercise better oversight for recipients of social service funding, or better publicize the availability of resources for low-income families. The first question to ask is always the same: who are the important decision makers?

- Which agency is in charge?
- Who in that agency has the ability to move your proposal forward?
- Who is the ultimate decision maker?
- What official process do they have to follow? For example, if you are seeking a change in agency policy, does an official have the authority to make that change on her own? Is there a formal process, with opportunity for public input? Is there an appeals process that you (or your opponents) may employ?

What do they think about your issue?

Once you've identified the key decision makers, pull together what you know about their record and positions:

- What is their voting record?

- What is their record on issues similar to your campaign?
- What kind of public statements have they made?
- Have you or any of your colleagues had a private conversation with them?

If you're a seasoned activist who has worked on an issue for a long time, you may already have this information in hand. If not, you may be able to find much of it with electronic searches of news articles or an agency's public records. If you don't feel confident working with electronic databases, ask a librarian for suggestions.

You can also take a direct approach: call the office of a public official and ask if they have a position for or against a particular piece of legislation. If you write a letter to a public official asking the same information, the written response, even if it's just a form letter, can let you know where they stand and what kind of public explanation they are giving for the position they take.

What makes them pay attention?

In addition to knowing where your decision makers stand on your specific issue, you need to try to understand what is important to them, and how they make decisions. That will help you decide how best to influence their decision making process. Among the important questions to ask:

- What issues do they most care about? Do they have passionate interests that you can find a way to connect to your campaign?
- Who do they listen to? Figure out whose opinions your decision makers trust. It might be that many legislators look to one of their colleagues who's an expert on an issue, or who is well-liked or respected. It may be that there are some lobbyists, donors, or other community leaders who are particularly close to a decision maker.
- How do they usually approach an issue? Are they people who generally focus on the financial implications of a proposal, or are they more likely to explain their positions in moral language? Do they tend to focus on the big picture (the welfare of the state) or on the details (the impact of a decision on a neighborhood or individual people)?
- What is their political situation or professional interest? Is an election coming up? Do they face a competitive election? Are they hoping to move into a higher position of authority? Can you make the case that leadership or effective resolution of your issue will help them reach their own goals?
- What else makes them tick? If you happen to know what kind of hobbies or entertainment they enjoy, or where they worship, you might find other ways to connect with them.

Assess Your Capabilities

Once you've identified key decision makers and ways you can influence them, consider the tools you have to work those levers of influence.

Existing Relationships

Evaluate the existing relationships that you or members of your coalition can use to influence the decision makers:

- Who among your team or coalition is particularly well-respected in the community?
- Who understands the political dynamics of their district and how they view their election or reelection needs?
- Which organizations have political influence or the ability to apply political pressure?
- Who has personal or professional relationships with the key decision makers or members of their "inner circle" of friends and advisors? Who volunteered or worked on their campaign? Who went to school with them? Served with them on the boards of community organizations?

Internal Resources

Identify resources you will need to carry out your plan. If you want to generate 250 phone calls to a key decision maker, does your organization or coalition have the ability to organize that? If you decide that a public rally or town hall will be important to staking out your position publicly, do you have the staff or volunteer time to organize it, and the financial resources to rent a space and take care of other expenses? If you believe that media outreach will play an important role in the campaign, do you have people who know how to work with media? Do you have funds, or a fundraising strategy, to pay for organizing materials or advertising?

If this is a major campaign, you may be able to hire or dedicate staff, such as a campaign manager, field organizer, or media coordinator. If you won't have the financial resources to hire staff, assess the time commitment that existing staff and volunteer leaders will be able to make for the campaign.

Create a budget that is based on your campaign plan. Every funder has different expectations about budget details, however they generally will want to see some level of detail to indicate that you have thought through the costs of your campaign, including staff time and other direct expenses. If your budget ends up being bigger than what you think you can reasonably raise, take another look at your campaign plan and figure out where you might trim first. But don't be afraid to ask for what it will take to carry out the kind of campaign your community needs. And don't forget to budget for the costs of fundraising itself, which can include printing, postage, staff time, travel, meals with potential donors, and the cost of fundraising receptions or other events.

If you determine that you are missing needed resources, you may need to review your goals and revise your strategic thinking. Do you need to broaden your team or your coalition? Is there a way to start small and expand as you gain visibility and access to additional funds?

Create a Written Action Plan

You have set clear and attainable goal(s). You have identified the people who have the power to help you achieve your goal(s). You understand the official decision making process. You know what matters to the decision makers and who they pay attention to. And you have a good sense of the resources that are available to you. Now it's time to put together an action plan.

Put into writing the steps you have decided to take to reach your goal. It should include a timeline as well as intermediate deadlines for key objectives. It should assign people clear responsibilities for carrying out or overseeing each task. This can be as simple as making a chart so that everyone can see what needs to happen next, who is responsible, and what timetable they have agreed to.

Choosing the right mix of tools

Among your activist tools are ways to communicate with and organize action from a small circle of influential people (often referred to as "grasstops" organizing) and among a broader public ("grassroots organizing"), as well as engaging the news media to tell your story. Which of these tools you use and when depends on what you've decided has the best chance to influence your decision makers. Is the first objective to convince a key committee chairperson to sponsor and push your legislation? Getting to that objective is probably a behind-the-scenes "grasstops" effort to identify his or her key advisors and allies, talk with them one-on-one to get their support, and then approach the lawmaker directly. A different stage in your campaign might require a much broader-based "grassroots" strategy that mobilizes constituents to weigh in with targeted legislators and generates a media spotlight on people who have the ability to advance or stop your progress.

In addition, your team should decide in advance on a system of accountability. How often will you meet to evaluate your progress? How will you work together to make sure that people meet the tasks for which they have accepted responsibility? Making those decisions up-front can help make sure that members of your campaign team work together well and reduce the chance that you'll be distracted by internal tensions.

Don't get so focused on your own campaign that you fail to take into account the external environment. Is it an election year? Is your state in the midst of a budget crisis? Are there a particular set of issues that seem to be dominating public debate? Are there major public events taking place during your timeline that provide organizing or communications possibilities?

work the plan, but don't be afraid to adjust it

You want to have a plan and timeline that are solid enough to guide your campaign's work and evaluate your progress. But it cannot be rigid. You will need to be flexible enough to respond to unexpected obstacles and adjust to new developments.

Resources:

Spitfire Strategies offers the "Just Enough Planning Guide" to campaign planning at http://www.justenoughplanning.org and its "Smart Chart" guide to communications planning at http://www.smartchart.org.

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RAISING MONEY

Fundraising is essential to any campaign. No matter how much passion and energy you have, or how motivated your volunteers are, a campaign will need some money for expenses ranging from printing and distributing educational materials, to organizing and publicizing events. It takes resources to set up information tables at public festivals and events, do mailings, keep volunteers happy with some food and drink—and of course pay for staff and advertising if that is part of your campaign strategy. Putting together a campaign plan, and estimating costs for each element of your plan, will give you a clearer sense of your fundraising goal.

Getting Ready

For an effective fundraising effort, you will need:

- A clear statement of your campaign's purpose (the need it fulfills or the problem it solves);
- Specific and measurable campaign goals;
- A well-conceived strategy and plan for reaching your goals;
- A reasonably detailed budget for putting your plan into action;
- A detailed plan for approaching funders and enlisting their help; and
- A willingness to ask for money.

Work with members of your own board and fundraising staff, as well as your coalition partners and other allies, to put together a campaign budget and fundraising strategy. Identify local foundations, individual philanthropists, labor and civic organizations, and social and political clubs that might be willing to support a well-thought out campaign that can result in real and long-lasting benefits to your community.

Statement of Need

Foundations, other institutional donors, and major donors may require a statement of need to explain why they are being asked to support your campaign. It describes the problem you are trying to resolve or the need you are trying to address. It should be concise, include specific facts that document the nature or extent of the problem, and show how your campaign can be the solution.

A statement of need could be just a couple of paragraphs. Here's one example of a very short statement of need from the Foundation Center:

> *"Breast cancer kills. But statistics prove that regular check-ups catch most breast cancer in the early stages, reducing the likelihood of death. Hence, a program to encourage preventive check-ups will reduce the risk of death due to breast cancer."*

make your case to potential donors

- *Identify the human need or social problem you will address.*
- *Document the need with data or validation from a respected source.*
- *Explain how the campaign is designed to address the need.*
- *Establish confidence in your campaign's strategy, expertise, ability to succeed.*
- *Discuss the beneficiaries of a successful campaign: individuals, communities, the country.*
- *Identify the resources you need and what you are asking for.*
- *Make it easy for a donor to give.*
- *Build on success by cultivating donors for future giving.*

Concrete Goals & Objectives
Funders are increasingly interested in having measurable ways to evaluate the effectiveness of their funding. Many of them will require you to outline specific "deliverables" or "metrics" that will be used to evaluate whether and how well you accomplish your goals. For a public education campaign this could include the number of people you plan to reach through various public activities and events, the number of news stories you generate (or approximate audience for them), or the number of individuals who take a specific action, such as signing a public statement or sending an email to a public official. *For more information, see the "Setting Goals" section of this toolkit.*

Action Plan
In addition to making the case for the necessity and value of the campaign, and stating your goals clearly, it is important to show potential funders that you have a strategic plan of action. Your campaign plan should spell out your strategy (planning, coalition or partnership development, volunteer recruitment and training, outreach activities, communication plan) as well as a calendar or timeline of key events or campaign milestones. *See the "Developing Strategy" section of this toolkit for more information.*

Budget
You will need to create a budget based on your campaign plan. Every potential donor has different expectations about budget details, however they generally will want to see that you have thought through the costs of your campaign, including staff time and other direct expenses. And don't forget to estimate and budget for costs of fundraising itself, which can include printing, postage, staff time, travel, meals with potential donors, and the cost of fundraising receptions or other events. If your budget ends up being bigger than what you think you can reasonably raise, take another look at your campaign plan and figure out where you might trim. But don't be afraid to ask for what it will take to carry out your campaign.

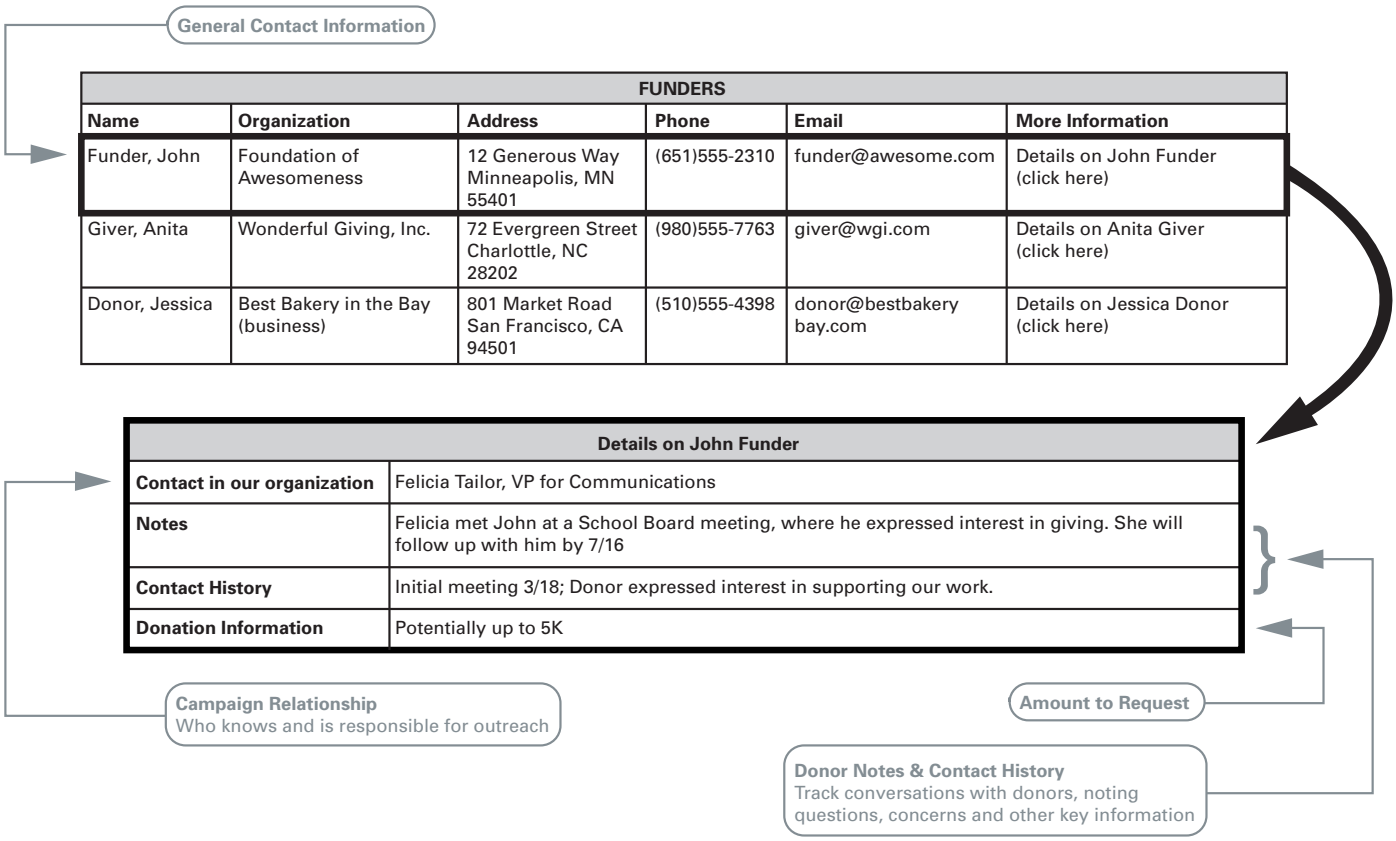
Identifying Potential Donors
Once you have a budget, consider your most likely funding sources.

- Do you have board members or donors who would be able to make a special contribution to this project?
- Are board members or donors willing to approach their colleagues?
- What other members of the community may be willing to contribute?
- What about local labor unions, political organizations, or other institutions that should have an interest in the outcome of your campaign?
- Are there churches or other religious congregations with community-focused funding who will see your campaign as fulfilling part of their social justice mission?
- Are there local foundations that focus on the well-being of your state, city, or community?

things to consider when budgeting for a campaign

- Personnel costs and/or consultant fees
- General office expenses (phone, copier)
- Events (space rental, permit fees, equipment rental, materials, refreshments for volunteers)
- Materials (printing, distribution, and writing and design, if not done in-house)
- Advertising
- Staff and volunteer travel expenses
- Fundraising expenses (printing, mailings, events, meetings with potential donors)
- Website maintenance and management
- Workshops and trainings
- Organizational development support
- Travel
- Translations and interpretation services
- Lease and venue rental
- Equipment
- Office maintenance
- Media
- Evaluation and monitoring

keeping track of donors: sample spreadsheet



FUNDERS					
Name	**Organization**	**Address**	**Phone**	**Email**	**More Information**
Funder, John	Foundation of Awesomeness	12 Generous Way Minneapolis, MN 55401	(651)555-2310	funder@awesome.com	Details on John Funder (click here)
Giver, Anita	Wonderful Giving, Inc.	72 Evergreen Street Charlottle, NC 28202	(980)555-7763	giver@wgi.com	Details on Anita Giver (click here)
Donor, Jessica	Best Bakery in the Bay (business)	801 Market Road San Francisco, CA 94501	(510)555-4398	donor@bestbakery bay.com	Details on Jessica Donor (click here)

Details on John Funder	
Contact in our organization	Felicia Tailor, VP for Communications
Notes	Felicia met John at a School Board meeting, where he expressed interest in giving. She will follow up with him by 7/16
Contact History	Initial meeting 3/18; Donor expressed interest in supporting our work.
Donation Information	Potentially up to 5K

Be sure to also include a **record of donations pledged and received**, and a column to record your **thanks and follow-up** communications with the donor

- What kind of fundraising events could you hold?
- Who can you reach by e-mail, Facebook, or other social networks to ask for financial support?

Create a spreadsheet of potential donors, beginning with those closest to you, such as board members and the organizations they represent. Give yourself a place to note donor's interests and activities so you can acknowledge and connect with things that are important to them. Keep track of who on your team is responsible for contacting each donor, and what kind of response they get.

Continue to broaden your initial list by asking board members and fellow activists to share their contacts with you—and to "open the door" by introducing you to their friends and contacts. Some donors may give because they share the goals of the campaign; others may give primarily based on their relationship with the person asking. Don't be shy about casting a wide net. It never hurts to ask—the worst thing that can happen is that someone says "no."

Keep in mind that institutional funders, such as community foundations, may have a specific timetable for considering funding requests and a long lead time in making grants. And you'll need to tailor your fundraising letter and other materials to meet their requirements.

Know Your Donors

The more you know about potential donors, the more you can make a connection between their interests and your campaign, and the better you'll be able to

food for thought from a veteran fundraiser

Why People Give

- They want to.
- They are asked to by other people.
- They see their gifts as opportunities.
- They believe in the organization and its mission.
- They believe the organization can meet the community's needs.
- They are involved in the organization.
- They want public recognition.
- They want tax benefits.

Why They Don't

- The wrong person asked.
- The case wasn't strong enough.
- The appeal wasn't personal enough.
- No one suggested a specific amount.
- No one suggested alternative ways of giving.
- No one followed up.

come up with an appropriate request. Some people may be able to give $1,000 while others may have to stretch to give you $10. When you put together your donor list, try to determine what level of giving is possible for people. You should know the giving history of your own board members and donors. A little research on foundations, other institutions, or prominent members of the community should guide you in setting targets.

Write a Fundraising Letter

Write a letter that you can send to potential donors. Use a personal tone and a direct style. Explain how a donor's support for your campaign will make a difference in your community or for the causes the donor cares about. For smaller donors, ask for a specific amount of money. For potentially major donors, ask for the opportunity to talk with the donor in person or by phone.

Develop Your Elevator Speech

Know your stuff. Before you start talking to potential donors in person or on the phone, practice making a quick and effective case for supporting your campaign until it comes naturally. Some people call this the "elevator speech"—a way to make your case in the few moments you might have their undivided attention. Think of it as a more conversational version of your written mission statement. Be sure to have some personal stories about people who are affected by the problem your campaign is addressing that you can weave into a longer conversation.

The Ask

Start a personal conversation by thanking your potential donor for their time and interest. Make your case and answer any questions. Ask unapologetically for a specific amount and don't be afraid to sit in silence while the donor considers your request.

Follow Up

After you have finished a meeting or phone call, jot down some notes about your conversation. Is their daughter getting married? Is their car giving them trouble? Did they have questions you couldn't answer? Did you offer to send any specific information? You can use these notes to personalize your thank-you note and develop a stronger relationship over time.

Fundraising Events

Fundraising events, such as a reception, luncheon, car wash, block party, music festival or auction, can be great ways to build energy and showcase the campaign for a lot of people at once. But events can take a lot of time and energy to pull off, and many campaign managers find that they are not the most cost-effective way to raise money. If you have a good track record with events, or if your community has a habit of turning out for them, make them part of your campaign plan. But be sure to consider your time and how you'll cover costs and make money.

Online Fundraising

New media and social networking sites offer other possibilities for building your base of supporters. *See the "Using New Media" section of the toolkit for more information.*

Additional Resources

- The Foundation Center offers free online tutorials and training courses in budgeting, proposal writing, and other topics, and sells books and other resources: http://www.foundationcenter.org
- You can find information and advice about putting together a fundraising plan, writing good fundraising letters, and maintaining relationships with donors here: http://nonprofit.about.com/od/fundraising/Fundraising_Tips_and_Tools.htm
- The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy and the Center for Community Change produced this advice on fundraising for community organizers: http://www.ncrp.org/files/publications/seizingthemoment.pdf

for taking care of donors

People who have given to your campaign are your most likely source of additional support as long as you make them feel appreciated and connected. Here are a few tips:

- *Thank donors personally and promptly. Hand written notes and thank-you calls can make a strong impression.*
- *Find ways to recognize their support publicly at events or on campaign materials.*
- *Keep them connected with campaign updates and invitations to campaign events. Email is a low-cost way to stay in touch.*
- *Ask for their ideas, input, and participation as well as their financial support.*

"encouraging words"

Don't be afraid or ashamed to ask for money. You believe in what you're doing and people will respond if you let your passion come through. Don't be discouraged if some people don't respond right away, or can't give at the moment. Asking for money gets easier with practice. The more people you ask, the more will give.

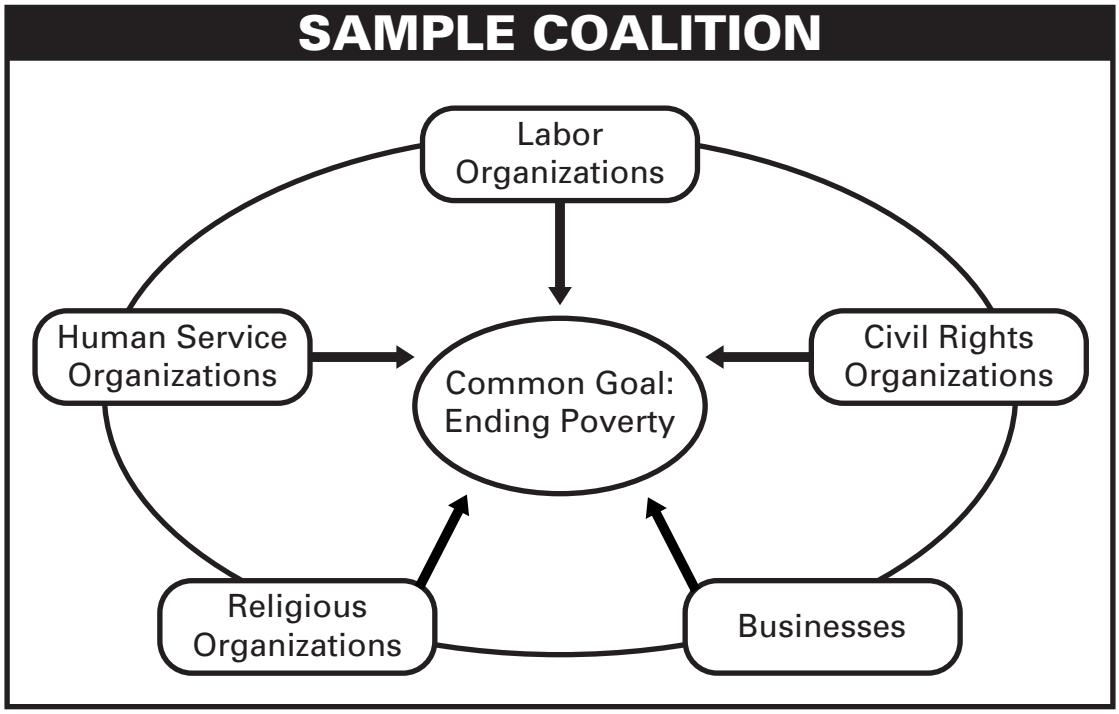
The Leadership Conference Education Fund

BUILDING AND SUSTAINING COALITIONS

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights is a coalition charged by its diverse membership to promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States. Through advocacy and outreach to targeted constituencies, The Leadership Conference works toward the goals of a more open and just society—an America as good as its ideals. The Leadership Conference and The Leadership Conference Education Fund believe in the power of coalitions, because every day we see how the diverse expertise and abilities of organizations working together strategically can create a whole that is greater, more efficient, and more effective than the sum of its parts.

A coalition is a group of organizations that agree to work together toward shared goals. It may be a more permanent and structured coalition, like The Leadership Conference, or a less formal collaborative working group that comes together as needed. Many coalitions will not have their own staff, but function as a team of people representing the coalition's members. For example, the Coalition Against Religious Discrimination includes national organizations that work together to monitor legislation, challenge threats to religious liberty, and promote policies to prevent taxpayer funded discrimination. It doesn't have its own staff or budget, but functions based on what each group is able to bring to the table.

A coalition may come together for a single purpose—to achieve one particular policy change—or maintain an ongoing effort to share information and pursue goals that reflect its members' shared values and priorities. Ideally, working together on one campaign will demonstrate the value of collaboration and encourage the maintenance of lasting relationships. Focusing on underlying values may help organizations that focus on a variety of different



issues to understand what they have in common and how they can support each other's efforts. As one grassroots organizer is fond of saying, "If you want a friend, be a friend."

Learning to work in coalition is an essential skill for bringing about change that would be impossible for a single organization to achieve on its own. It's hard to imagine any public education or advocacy campaign that would not be strengthened by a larger and more diverse coalition. Of course, coalitions also require their own investment of thought, energy, good will, and open communication to keep diverse groups focused on a common goal.

Identify and Recruit Potential Coalition Partners

When you are ready to build or expand an existing coalition, keep two things in mind. On one hand, you want your coalition to be as broad and diverse as possible, so that it reflects and can draw interest and resources from as many different segments of the community as possible. On the other hand, you want to be sure that any groups joining the coalition are solidly supportive of your goals and mission. Not every public-minded group will be able to join every coalition. But try not to limit yourself to thinking only of the "usual suspects"—people and groups you're comfortable or used to working with on particular issues.

For example, the coalition of organizations that worked successfully for passage of federal hate crimes legislation included not only traditional civil rights organizations and groups that advocate for particular communities (including the rights of women, people with disabilities, and LGBT people), but also law enforcement groups. Advocates for immigration reform are working in coalition with religious groups from across the political spectrum that usually are on opposing sides of public policy issues.

Look for intersecting interests and focus them on common goals. Passing legislation to overturn the Supreme Court's egregious misinterpretation of anti-discrimination law brought together groups primarily interested in women's equality and those whose main focus is workers' rights.

"encouraging words"

The coalition has to fit the campaign, not the other way around. When approaching other groups that you would like to work in coalition with, it's important to be open to their ideas and input, but not at the expense of the campaign losing cohesion or wasting anybody's time working on a huge project that won't actually benefit them in the long run.

Start by making a list of people you know and groups whose missions are clearly aligned with the goals of your campaign. Build outward to include groups that generally share your values but may not have worked on the issue specific to your campaign. Unexpected allies can help get your message to new audiences.

Here's an example. Let's say your goal is to create a new ethics commission that would have both the independence and the power to tackle corruption in state government and hold elected and appointed officials accountable. You could start with your most likely allies, such as groups with a focus on ethics and accountability in government. That might include your state Common Cause affiliate and the League of Women Voters. Consider organizations that are likely to share the values your campaign will promote: honesty and accountability in government. That might include ministerial associations, interfaith coalitions and local community groups. Next think about other potential allies who might see value in the campaign: community service organizations, state or local bar associations, public employee unions, state and local chambers of commerce, and other public interest advocates who see favoritism and corruption standing in the way of their ability to do their jobs or compete fairly for funding.

Call people you know personally. When you've enlisted their support, ask them to take a look at

The Leadership Conference and The Education Fund are experts at establishing and maintaining coalitions at the national level and working to engage allies at the state and local levels. Feel free to contact the field staff at grassroots@civilrights.org with any questions.

think inclusively

Diversity is about much more than skin color. It is important to engage and create leadership opportunities for individuals and organizations representing the full range of people most affected by the issue you're working on. For example, if you are building a coalition in support of better voting rights enforcement, involve groups representing African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, immigrants, people with disabilities, people who speak languages other than English, people in faith communities, or labor unions. Think about diversity in terms of age, religion, sexuality, and gender identity. Include local affiliates of national organizations and local community-based organizations.

your list of prospective coalition participants and get their suggestions for potential additions. If they have personal or professional relationships with some of your potential partners, ask if they'll make the first contact or introduce you.

Have a short written description of the coalition's goals and objectives ready to send as a follow-up to your conversation. Give people different ways to be involved depending on their own organizational capacities; if they can't serve on the steering committee, perhaps they can name a staff liaison to the campaign or task force. If they can't commit to long-term participation, maybe they can co-sponsor a single public event. Be careful not to take a polite expression of interest as a commitment to the campaign; don't put anyone's name on a public list of coalition members without having their confirmation in writing.

Some organizations may have to follow a formal process before signing on to a new campaign. You might be asked to speak at a board meeting, for example. Or you might be added to the agenda for a service club's monthly meeting. Think of these as opportunities to make new allies and to sharpen your ability to make a short and compelling case for your campaign.

Attend community meetings and other organizations' events where you'll be able to meet community leaders. Be sure to collect business cards and to have someone follow up with each person you meet. Creating and maintaining a database of contacts—like an Excel spreadsheet—will help you keep track of who you have met, what level of information you shared, and what kind of response you received.

Building Common Purpose

Getting and maintaining agreement on the coalition's purpose, strategy, and activities can sometimes be challenging, especially if you are fortunate enough to have a large and diverse coalition. Try to have clear buy-in on the goals, strategy, and action plan as early as possible.

And that brings up a basic dilemma about running a campaign and building a coalition—the inherent tension between the need for a relatively small working group that can plan and make decisions nimbly and the importance of having partner groups feel that they have a voice in decision making. You can help keep the coalition working well together by having an agreed-upon and clearly understood procedure for coalition decision making. Perhaps a small group of half a dozen organizations will be considered an executive committee or board of directors that will have the power to make decisions and release statements on the coalition's behalf. If you decide that a majority of coalition members must agree before the executive committee can authorize new positions or activities that have not been part of previous plans, be sure there's a commitment from members to respond in a timely fashion when decisions need to be made.

Public attention may bring more allies to you. But that's more likely if you have made an effort from the start to be broadly inclusive. Some groups may resent being asked to add their names to what feels like a finished product without opportunity for input. Others will be grateful to have had someone else do the planning and will be content to lend their support as long as the demands on their time will be minimal. Keep in mind that it's only human to want to feel included—and respected.

You will find it easier to build broad coalition support for your campaign if you have been supportive of others. When the Washington, D.C. City Council was considering marriage equality legislation, an interracial and interfaith coalition of pro-equality clergy played an important role in shaping the public

conversation. One of the group's leaders, a gay White minister, said that he was able to go to his colleagues in the community and ask for their support on this issue because he had been working with them for the past decade on issues like affordable housing.

Structure

Every coalition will have different needs and dynamics. If the coalition is more than a few representatives, it may need a steering committee or executive working group that will serve as a functional board. It may also be useful to create working groups or task forces that take responsibility for different aspects of the coalition's work. For example, there is a national coalition of organizations interested in judicial independence and the role of the federal courts in protecting constitutional values and individual rights. It is a broad coalition that functions through task forces that focus on research, communications, and grassroots organizing. Each task force coordinates its work with others through the larger coalition and its steering committee.

Keeping it Together

Maintaining a coalition's focus on a shared plan can sometimes be challenging. Even when you share a common goal, it's easy for disagreements to arise among people with different perspectives, levels of expertise, personal histories, and organizational interests. Here are some general tips for trying to keep a coalition running smoothly.

Clarity is your friend

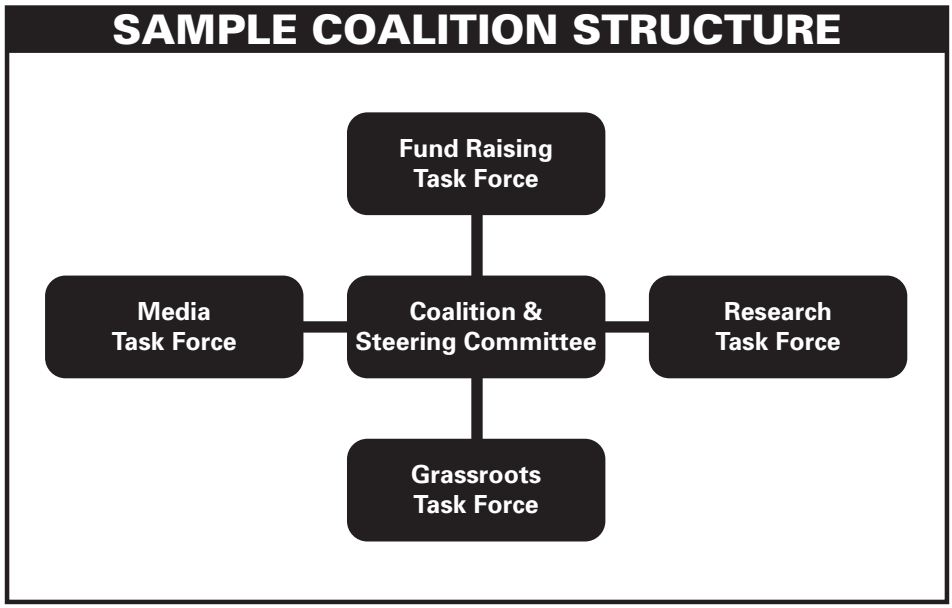
Having clear goals, plans, procedures, and assigned responsibilities is one of the best ways to minimize potential conflict. Be sure everyone understands and accepts how decisions will be made. After each meeting, be sure to recap what has been decided, who has taken responsibility for which tasks, and when they have agreed to complete them. Putting things in writing helps make sure everyone comes out of a meeting with the same understanding of what was decided, and it's a good way to raise disagreements or misunderstandings before they cause larger problems.

outreach to colleges and universities

When you are identifying potential coalition partners, spokespeople, and volunteers, be sure to consider the resources that are available through local colleges and universities. Faculty and students can be great sources of expertise and activist energy. Campuses can often provide low-cost or free meeting space, especially if you are working with a recognized student group. Identify and recruit active support from social and political student groups. Ask interested students or faculty members to become active in your campaign, sponsor an on-campus forum, distribute flyers on campus, recruit fellow students through existing email lists or social networks, or write letters to the campus or community newspaper. If you have a critical mass of support you might be able to create a campus (or multiple-campus) arm of your campaign team. You may be able to identify campus leaders through one of the progressive youth leadership programs, including the Center for Community Change's Generation Change project, People For the American Way Foundation's Young People For, and the Center for American Progress's Campus Progress.

"encouraging words"

There are no set rules that apply in every situation. You'll have to make some judgment calls about how big your core planning and decision making team can be. And you'll have to decide at what point to reach out beyond that core team to broaden the coalition. You want to do much of your coalition building before going public, so that you can make a splash with the breadth of your support.



Be aware of power dynamics

If one or two organizations dominate a coalition, others' commitment might diminish over time. Remember that each organization in a coalition still has its own priorities and needs for visibility, membership engagement, and fundraising. Find ways to share the coalition's voice.

Communicate frequently and in a way that everyone agrees will be efficient

If you have a small coalition, you may decide to have monthly or weekly meetings to track your progress and make necessary adjustments to your plan. If you have a larger coalition, there may be separate meetings for the executive committee and for task forces organized around specific work areas (like media outreach) or projects (such as the planning team for an event). Be sure that different parts of the coalition communicate decisions and progress to each other—especially when plans are changed.

Clear, shared understanding of goals and plans along with frequent communication should minimize the potential for serious conflict within your coalition. If serious disagreements arise that threaten the group's ability to work together or disrupt progress toward the goal, try to deal with them honestly and directly. Here are some tips:

- Recognize the problem directly and respectfully.
- Seek clarity on the nature of the problem: Is it a fundamental disagreement about strategy? A struggle over turf or visibility? A personality conflict between one or more members of the group?
- Try to identify a coalition member or community leader who might be able to mediate the differences or propose a resolution.

If sincere efforts fall short of resolving disputes, try to determine whether they can be worked around (for example, placing people with difficulty working together on different task forces) or whether there's an acceptable compromise on strategy or tactics that all sides can live with.

Remember that it's normal to hit bumps in the road. Campaigns can bring out intense emotions that can lead to conflicts even among people with the best of intentions. Try not to let challenges frustrate you or distract your focus on carrying out your campaign plan and accomplishing your goals. Disagreements are to be expected and resolving them is part of the process of managing a successful campaign. In fact, by demonstrating a shared willingness to deal openly with disagreements and by working to resolve them together, coalitions can come through conflict with greater mutual trust and respect and a renewed commitment to working together.

when you can't meet in person

People may find it easier and less disruptive to their schedules to hold some meetings by conference calls. Larger organizations may have their own conference call systems. If you don't have an organization with that capability, you can arrange conference lines through services such as http://www.freeconferencecall.com.

One of the best ways to communicate quickly with a large number of people is to set up a group email list. It's virtually free and instantaneous and will probably be your primary means of getting information to everyone in the coalition. If there's anyone in your coalition who doesn't yet have an email address, you can help them get one through a free service such as Microsoft's Hotmail (http://www.hotmail.com) or Google's Gmail (http://www.gmail.com). Both Google Groups (http://groups.google.com) and Yahoo Groups (http://groups.yahoo.com) allow you to set up email lists for free. If you have coalition members without reliable access to the Internet, be sure that someone takes responsibility for mailing them important materials that are shared on the list.

The Leadership Conference Education Fund

ORGANIZING YOUR COMMUNITY

The election of a former community organizer to the presidency of the United States—in large part due to his campaign's hugely successful organizing efforts—brought new attention to the importance and potential impact of organizing individuals and communities to take action to improve their lives.

Successful organizing includes building knowledge of a need or issue, developing a shared understanding of who has the power to make the desired change, and motivating people to take the actions necessary to influence those in power. Your choice of organizing tactics will be focused on moving people, individually and collectively, to play a part in your campaign.

Crucial to any successful organizing effort are messages that resonate with the people you want to engage, trusted messengers, and opportunities that make it easy for organizations and individuals to participate. At some points in your campaign you may be focused narrowly on mobilizing people who are already committed to your cause to take specific actions, like contacting public officials. At other times, you may seek to educate and engage a target audience that is less familiar to you. Taking time to get to know the concerns of the people you want to organize is essential to identifying your shared interests and motivating them to join your campaign.

You can reach people through in-person engagement such as one-on-one networking, door-to-door canvassing, participating in public events like neighborhood festivals, and creating your own events. There are also a wide range of tools and technologies that can be deployed to reach people as well (mail, phone, email, and online social networks).

Starting Small

Educational and organizing events don't have to be large productions. In fact, you might want to start with small gatherings where organizational and community leaders and other individuals can learn about your campaign, share their concerns, and ask questions they might not feel comfortable asking in a large public setting. You could do something as simple as inviting a few people to your office for a bring-your-own-lunch conversation.

Holding small informal meetings early in your campaign can help you find out about challenges or resistance you might face in the broader community. You can learn more about people's values, needs, and priorities, and make adjustments to your educational materials and messaging. You might also identify people to recruit as messengers and campaign leaders.

Consider easy ways to integrate small educational events into your existing programs and activities. If your organization hosts classes or regular information-sharing sessions, have campaign materials available and encourage people to take part. If a group of service providers has a monthly meeting, ask for some time on the agenda to talk about the campaign and ask for input and participation.

Reaching Ready-Made Audiences

Take advantage of public events that will give you visibility and access to groups of people you want to engage in your campaign. If you are trying to reach residents of a particular neighborhood or constituency, plan to attend block parties, music concerts, or holiday celebrations. Neighborhood, religious and cultural festivals may give you good opportunities to set up information tables or have volunteers working the crowd and distributing information. Some may even let you speak—you just have to figure out who to ask. You may be able to encourage other organizations to help produce a major public event by creating an event that combines

your campaign with another organizing effort, such as voter registration.

Here's a checklist for working public events:

√ Make sure you understand the ground rules for setting up a table or distributing materials (for example, you may need to rent a table or get a permit to set up in a public space).

√ Make sure the space is accessible for people with disabilities.

√ Create engaging visuals: banners, signs, recognizable t-shirts for your volunteers.

√ Try to get everyone who shows interest to give you their contact information on a sign-up sheet.

√ Give people an easy way to take action, like signing a postcard or petition.

√ Consider offering candy, stickers, or other small give aways that will draw people to your table, or holding a free raffle for a small prize, like a gift certificate to a local restaurant.

√ Determine what kind(s) of materials you want to distribute and how much you'll need: fact sheets, flyers, palm cards or postcards that people can send to public officials, etc.

√ Your budget should include the cost of renting a space, if any, as well as the cost to produce materials and provide some refreshments for your volunteers and for people who stop by.

Creating a Larger Community Event

One way to raise awareness of an issue or build energy and enthusiasm for a campaign is to organize a larger-scale town meeting, panel discussion, public debate, or more informal event like a block party. Here are things to consider as part of your planning.

Budget

An event doesn't have to cost a lot of money to produce, especially if you or a friendly organization has access to rent-free space and equipment. You can save money if other organizations co-sponsor the event, share costs, or provide materials or refreshments. Often, the local businesses and coalition partners will provide in-kind resources and other commodities if given the opportunity to be listed as a co-sponsor. You might be able to make a deal with a local copy shop and get free copies in return for advertising its name on the back of your brochures and flyers. Be creative!

Hpwever, producing an event will take some money, even if you are able to get a location and some support donated. Consider and plan for the potential costs of space, food, materials, promotion, sound system, staff time, and parking.

Timeline

Develop a timeline of steps needed to plan, promote, and carry out your event. Be sure to give yourself enough time to get the word out to your target audience once you've nailed down the logistics. A good rule of thumb is to work backward from the date of the event and see where certain deadlines fall, such as being listed in a community calendar or having materials printed. Assign staff or volunteers responsibility for getting each task done.

Space

Identify a location where the people you are trying to reach will naturally go; is convenient and easy to find; has free parking; is accessible for people with disabilities; can accommodate a sound system and maybe some video. Make sure the space is a good size for your expected turnout, and err on the small side. Turning out 100 people is a big accomplishment but won't feel that way in an auditorium that holds 1,000. Consider whether the location is considered neutral or common ground rather than being associated closely with one leader or political or cultural faction of the audience you want to attend.

Publicity and Outreach

Create flyers promoting your event and have them available at the offices and service centers for local community organizations. Encourage local groups and congregations to publicize your event in their newsletters, websites, and blogs. Ask local radio stations to consider running public service announcements or have you on the air to talk about the event. Ask community newspapers to include

A flyer or poster advertising an event is meant to get someone's attention and stir interest in attending. It's not meant to explain the issue in-depth—that's what the event is for. Keep the text minimal and make it eye-catching.

"encouraging words"

"Build it and they will come" might work in the movies, but it's not a successful approach to organizing. Turnout takes hard work.

the event in their calendar sections (keep in mind that some of these need lead times of more than a week). Ask coalition partners to commit to turning out a certain number of people. And make sure all your sponsoring organizations make phone calls. Media publicity is helpful, but individual contact is the most essential element to generating good turnout. And it's important to have good turnout at public events, which will generate excitement and momentum for the campaign.

Format

How your space is set up physically will affect how people can interact. For a presentation or discussion among a small group of people, use a square or U-shaped conference table. For a larger event focused primarily on presentations from speakers or a panel, set up a head table with the audience in rows, in a theater-style setting. If you want to encourage discussion among participants, or plan to have them break into small groups to discuss issues or strategies, set the room up with tables like a banquet room, with speakers at a head table.

No matter how your room is set up overall, be sure to have tables near the door where people will sign in when entering, and sign up for future actions or take materials when leaving.

Agenda

Think about your goals as you put together your agenda and speakers. Are different communities affected by the issue or coalition partners with differing perspectives represented? Is your event designed to provide information about the issue and draw them into your campaign? Include speakers who can energize people as well as educate them. High-profile community leaders and local "celebrities" can drive up turnout.

Materials

Decide what kind of materials you will need. In addition to basic fact sheets about the issue and campaign, you might want worksheets for small group brainstorming, a suggestion box, flyers for upcoming events, and flyers or palm cards for participants who are willing to take part in publicity and outreach efforts.

Engagement

Give people something to do before they leave the meeting. They can sign a petition or postcard, or sign up to volunteer for a campaign committee or task force, or pledge to distribute information in their community or organization.

turnout

- *Attend community meetings and ask permission to make announcements about your event.*
- *Get coalition partners to publicize your event in their newsletters and other communications with members or constituents.*
- *Submit listings to newspapers and radio stations with community calendars.*
- *Ask coalition groups and allies to make specific commitments to turn out a certain number of people and follow up with them to make sure they are planning to do it.*
- *Call your own members, constituents, and supporters and ask for commitments to attend. Try to get people to commit to bringing one or more friends with them.*

Canvassing

Sometimes the best way to reach a community, or residents of a particular neighborhood or electoral district, is through door-to-door canvassing. Canvassing is a labor-intensive effort that requires good planning, careful organizing, and serious attention to the recruitment, training, and management of volunteers. Members of your group or coalition who have taken part in political campaigns may have good experience in setting up and overseeing a door-to-door operation. If you don't have that experience among your core group, you could ask local elected officials or political party activists for suggestions on people who have experience in running a canvass and might be willing to help you.

Key things to remember:

- Have training sessions for volunteers to make sure they understand your campaign's key messages and know how to handle any difficulties that may arise.

Sample Event Agenda:

11:30 am: (30 minutes)
- Set up tables, chairs, signage, food, etc. Make sure AV equipment is set up and working, name placards and water are on the table for the speakers.

12:00 pm: (5 minutes)
- As participants arrive, have them sign in and provide name tags.
- Direct speakers to their seats.
- Coordinate people getting food and getting seated.

12:05 pm: (5 minutes)
- Forum leader introduces moderator and key organizations involved.
- Moderator thanks everyone for coming. Thanks organizations who helped co-sponsor this event, outlines the agenda for the event and gives a brief background on why the coalition organized event.
- Moderator introduces panelists.

12:10 pm: (15 minutes)
- Panelist A speaks for 5 minutes.
- Panelist B speaks for 5 minutes.
- Panelist C speaks for 5 minutes.

12:25 pm: (30 minutes)
- Moderator leads Q&A discussion session with audience.
- Coalition members should think of a few questions in advance just in case people are too shy to ask questions at first.

12:55 pm: (5 minutes)
- Forum leader wraps up with key messages, a call to action (what people can do in their community), and thanks all for participating.

1:00 pm:
- Conclusion of forum.
- Clean-up.

- Set up a good plan to cover the neighborhood and a record-keeping system so that you can track which households you've contacted. That will help you do effective follow-up canvassing to reach as many people as possible and not annoy people by contacting them repeatedly.
- Canvass on weekends or late afternoons when families are most likely to be home.
- Try to recruit volunteers who live in the neighborhood where you are going to canvass.
- Try to recruit bilingual volunteers in neighborhoods where many people speak languages other than English.
- Consider a block party or other event to launch a neighborhood canvass, recruit volunteers, and let people know that someone may be contacting them.

Virtual Events

You can also create events that don't require people to leave their home or office by setting up conference calls or online "webinars."

Conference calls

Conference calls can be a great way to reach a large number of people in order to hear a motivational speech from the campaign manager or a public official; to update activists (and media) on new developments or campaign milestones; or to allow activists to share success stories with each other. Readily available conference call technology can allow you to have several speakers in different locations who can also talk with each other before speaking to the wider group of participants. You can "moderate" the call in order to control audience participation, create an orderly Q&A process and more. For a simple conferene call you may be able to use in-house technology for your organization or a coalition partner. Check out available services like http://www.freeconferencecall.com. Or, if you have more complicated needs, try a company, such as http://www.copperconferencing.com.

Webinars

Webinars are conference calls with the added component of people looking at visual information on their computers. Participants phone into a shared conference call number and use the Internet to join the webinar. You might discuss polling results while showing charts of the data, share first drafts of materials for discussion, or show recruiting videos or advertisements. Webinars can be highly interactive, allowing participants to raise questions by phone or email, or to edit materials live while other participants watch. Participating in webinars generally requires people to have a decent computer and good Internet connection, and to be willing to download some software. If your organization does not have its own webinar organizing capabilities, you can arrange with companies like http://www.gotowebinar.com.

Organizing Online

Social networking sites like Facebook (http://www.facebook.com), Myspace (http://www.myspace.com), Gather (http://www.gather.com) and others provide opportunities to create and build communities of support for your campaign. Facebook has more than 160 million users in the United States and more than 500 million worldwide. At the end of 2010, Twitter (http://www.twitter.com) had more than 175 million active users and was growing by millions each month.

The power of social networking sites is that people connect to issues and causes through their friends and shared interests—and that they provide access through individuals' networks of friends, fans, and followers to people you might not be able to reach otherwise. On Facebook you can create a page for your group or campaign, invite people to events, share photographs of campaign activities, post campaign updates, and ask supporters to recruit among their friends.

Like having an effective website, having an engaging social network presence and campaign will require someone's time to keep it updated and lively. You'll want to have a strategy in place for feeding interesting information and action opportunities (like a contest for slogan ideas) to people who join your network.

See the "Using New Media" section of this toolkit for more in-depth information.

Resources:

- Activation Point, a report by Spitfire Strategies on what moves people to action, is available at: http://www.activationpoint.org
- For a simple conference call you may be able to use in-house technology for your organization or a coalition partner. Check out available services like. Or, if you have more complicated needs, try a company such as Copper Conferencing: http://www.copperconferencing.com
- For more information on webinars see: http://www.idealware.org/articles/fgt_online_conferencing.php
- For tips on planning a successful webinar, check out: http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/training/page11252.cfm
- For other technical questions, see: http://www.techsoup.com

The Leadership Conference Education Fund

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

Communicating an effective message to the people you want to reach, directly or through the media, is an essential part of any campaign. Not every campaign will incorporate a media component, but getting your messages out through print, broadcast and the Internet are among the best ways to reach a large audience, or even a targeted one. News coverage can and should reinforce your organizing work. And many of the new forms of media—like blogs and social networks—operate as both communications and organizing vehicles and provide multiple ways to get your message out.

Components of a Communications Strategy

In order to put together a communications plan, you need to think through a few things:

- Audience(s): Who are you trying to reach?
- What kinds of media do your audiences pay attention to? What other ways can you reach them?
- Messages: What messages will move people to take the action you want? How can you package and deliver those messages effectively through the media?
- Spokespeople: Who will be credible and effective at getting your message heard by the people you're trying to reach?
- Information and Events: What kinds of information do you have, or events can you create, that will interest the media and enable you to place stories or get your spokespeople in print or on the air?
- What are the campaign milestones that will make good stories?

Who's Your Audience?

Your communications strategy should start with a clear sense of the audience(s) you need to reach. Even in a public education campaign, your primary audience is most likely not the public as a whole, but some targeted subset. In any campaign you might have several sets of audiences. If you're building support for legislative action on an issue, your primary audiences might include not only legislators but also their staff, the media in their district, people whose opinions they rely on, and their constituents who share your concerns.

For example, The Education Fund worked with other public interest groups to mobilize a major public education campaign around the 2010 census. The goal of the census is to count every person in America. Of course, The Education Fund campaign couldn't possibly reach out to 300 million people in the country. Instead, The Education Fund and its allies focused on 15 cities with large populations of people who were likely to go uncounted by the census. Among hard-to-count constituencies,—The Education Fund campaign's audience—were racial and ethnic minorities, people with limited English proficiency, people with disabilities, low-income families and children. The campaign focused its organizing and media strategies to maximize the outreach to these defined groups of people.

How Can You Reach Them?

Once you have identified your primary audiences, make a list of the different ways you can reach them. Your media list could include "mainstream media"—such as the daily paper and local TV stations—as well as weeklies like neighborhood papers and publications targeted to specific audiences such as African Americans or Latinos. What radio stations are most popular in your target communities, and what kind of local news or community affairs programs might interview your spokespeople? Are

Media is just one way to reach your audiences. See the *"Organizing Your Community"* and *"Using New Media"* sections for discussion about reaching audiences through in-person and online organizing strategies.

there major churches with newsletters that cover community affairs? Don't overlook newspapers and broadcast outlets that are in languages other than English. And don't forget the Internet; most areas now have websites and bloggers that cover community affairs and local politics. Many of them have influential audiences, which include mainstream journalists.

Once you've made a list of news outlets you want to reach, figure out the key people you need to reach. If you or the organizations in your coalition don't already have contacts in the media, you can build your own list including:

- Newspaper reporters who cover the issue you're working on.
- The reporter who covers your area for the Associated Press news service (http://www.ap.org).
- Columnists who write about politics or community affairs.
- Producers for local television and radio news.
- News anchors and reporters who cover public affairs.

If you don't know the right person to talk to at a particular outlet, call the news room or assignment editor and ask who covers your issue.

What's Your Message?

Messaging will be the heart of your communications campaign. A public education and advocacy campaign has to educate people and motivate them to take some sort of action. Your messages should accomplish both. Once you have refined your messages, get everyone involved in your campaign to use them. Repetition is key to a message sinking in.

Develop a short list of main messages—the key points you want to get to your audiences. Developing effective messages is as much art as science. But it's not rocket science. Here are some characteristics of good messaging.

Short and simple

Prepare a short list of key campaign messages or talking points. If you have several different audiences, you might also have one or two special messages for those audiences. Each message should be short enough for a speaker to remember and repeat easily, and for a listener to understand and remember.

Inspiring and motivating

Ground your messages in the values and priorities of the people you are trying to reach. Your main messages should let people know how taking action in your campaign will help them advance their values and help them bring about the kind of community and country they want to live in.

Avoid wonkery

Avoid jargon, overly technical terms, or acronyms that will mean more to insiders than to your audience generally. Also avoid having your main messages get too far into the details of a policy proposal. You'll need to explain those details, of course, but the main messages should get a sense of the change you want to make and the values you want to advance.

For example, if you were running a campaign to boost state support for nutrition programs for people living below the poverty level by 20 percent, or you are trying to make a complicated policy change that

don't overlook bloggers when putting together your media list

Some bloggers, including those run by news operations, function primarily as extensions of the newspaper, even though writing for blogs is usually less formal. You should treat them as news organizations. Many cities and states have independent blogs that cover politics and have influential readerships that include other journalists. Try to establish a relationship with them. Some other bloggers view themselves more as advocates and political organizers. You might want to identify some advocacy blogs that write about your issue and invite them into your campaign strategy; they may want to be part of your campaign plan for getting your message out to the online community. A little time spent reading a local blog should help you figure out what angle they take on issues.

will expand the availability of breakfast programs for children of poor families, your main messages might be something along these lines:

- We can build stronger communities by building healthier families.
- Schools work better and students learn more when children have a healthy breakfast.

Tell stories

Find ways to illustrate your main messages with stories that put a human face on them. Personal stories can be more effective than policy language or political rhetoric at helping people understand what is at stake and how your campaign will make a difference in people's lives. Be sure to make a clear link between your story and your message.

Here's how a campaign spokesperson might link a story to a campaign message:

> *I've been a teacher for 15 years. I know from personal experience that students who come to school without a decent breakfast have a harder time concentrating. That makes them more likely to be distracted, and to distract other students. It's one more barrier to learning for children who face a lot of them. Schools work better and students learn more when children have a healthy breakfast. In my experience, it's a great investment.*

Test your messages

It's always a good idea to get some feedback on your intended messaging from people who are part of the audiences you are trying to reach.

In a formal focus group, a company with expertise in public opinion research identifies a pool of people who meet your audience criteria and invites them to spend 90 minutes or two hours participating in a focused conversation. Participants are paid for their time, typically $75 or $100. You and your colleagues can watch from behind a one-way mirror while a trained moderator leads a small group discussion among eight or 10 people. A good focus group can help you understand not only the positions people take but the values, emotions, hopes, and fears that underlie those positions. A focus group will also give you some subjective reactions to draft messages and materials. A good moderator will be able to probe beyond positive or negative reactions to ask questions like, "Why didn't you like that?" "What about that ad did not sit well with you?" "Why don't you think that was convincing?" While formal focus groups can be extremely useful, you do have to remember that it's still one small group of people and you can't treat their reactions as necessarily indicative of your audience as a whole. You generally don't want to limit yourself to just one group because dynamics can be strongly influenced by particular personalities in any given group. Some companies now do interactive focus groups online, where people look at and evaluate materials that are presented on their computer.

If you don't have the budget (several thousand dollars per group) to conduct formal focus groups, you can get useful feedback on messaging and materials with informal focus groups. Ask members of your coalition to identify a few people who would be willing to have a conversation over lunch. Or identify a church or community group that would be willing to host a conversation with some of its members. Present your draft messages, show them draft campaign materials, and encourage honest feedback. Have someone who is good at engaging people in conversation act as a moderator, probing for more than one-word answers.

Polling

If your campaign is going to invest a lot of money in advertising or other public outreach, it may be worth investing in some polling to find out where the public (or the part of the public you are trying to reach) stands on an issue and test the effectiveness of some of your messages. Polling doesn't allow for the same kind of give-and-take that focus groups can, but a properly run poll can give you a more reliable sense of the positions and opinions of a particular subset of the public. Some polling is designed to help you shape your message. Other poll results may themselves become part of your message: "More than 60 percent of our state's residents believe this change is needed. Why are our elected officials standing in the way?"

You can get also try to get information from a targeted group of people by using an online tool such as Survey Monkey (http://www.surveymonkey.com), which allows you to create free online surveys. It won't give you the same kind of scientific data that a professional poll will, but you can get useful information by creating an online survey and find

a way to get members of your target audience to complete it. (It also lets them give you anonymous feedback that may be more honest.)

Identify Spokespeople

It's a good idea to have a handful of spokespeople who can convincingly communicate and reinforce your campaign messages. Your spokespeople should be:

- Considered credible, likable, and trustworthy by you, the media, and your audience.
- Willing to be team players and stick to your campaign plan and messages.
- Have experience working with the media or are willing to spend time learning and practicing how to do it well.
- Are willing to commit time to appearing at public events or speaking with reporters.

The news media is often interested in "unexpected allies." So you may try to include people who might be viewed more typically as adversaries on a particular issue, such as a union official and a business leader, or political figures from different parties. You might demonstrate a breadth of community support by including religious leaders from different faiths or denominations.

Dealing with the Media

It's a tough time to be a journalist. The news industry is going through its own economic downturn, and fewer reporters are being asked to do more work. Your goal is to establish a relationship that gets reporters to start thinking of you as a resource who can help them get their job done. You should:

- Provide them with useful information or help them find it.
- Return their phone calls or emails quickly.
- Find out what their deadlines are and do everything you can to meet them.
- Learn what kind of stories they write or produce, figure out angles that will work for them, pitch them on the idea, and put them in touch with people they need to talk to.

If a reporter asks for information "on background" or "off the record," be sure you know exactly what he or she means by those ground rules. **Background** generally means the reporter can use the information without attributing it to you. **Off the record** means that you're giving information that can't be used in a story. You can't apply these retroactively—by telling a reporter something and then saying, "That's off the record!" It doesn't work that way.

Most of the time, you should stay on record with a reporter. One exception might be to ask to speak on background if you want to be able to have a conversation and talk freely without making sure every sentence is put together well. You could suggest that the conversation be on background, and that at the end of the conversation you can give on the record quotes in answer to any particular question.

Be aware that conflict and controversy are often good stories from the media's perspective. If a reporter invites you to start or fuel a conflict, be thoughtful about how you want the story to be framed. Will fostering the conflict be helpful to your message or will it distract from the focus you want the story to have?

Grabbing the Media's Interest

What makes a good story?

As you develop a media outreach plan, keep reporters' needs in mind. A reporter needs to be able to provide readers with important information and tell a good story. And television producers or reporters need good visuals to go with any story. Here are some elements of a good story that can help you get reporters interested:

- Reasons to care—how can the story make an impact on people and the community.
- Good messengers—spokespeople are interesting or compelling.
- A particular angle or niche—a specific detail is a good way into a story, such as the number of people served by a local health clinic.

- Something specific to the calendar—a relevant anniversary, an important deadline for qualifying for federal assistance, etc.
- Making "news"—launching a campaign, releasing a report, calling for an official investigation.
- Good visuals—especially for TV.
- Ease of coverage—make journalists' jobs easier by offering clear information, compelling spokespeople, and quick responses to any questions.

"Pitching" Journalists

Your "pitch" is what you tell a journalist to generate interest in covering your campaign generally or a specific event. It should be short and to the point. It should take into account a journalists' need for news and a good story. Before you pick up the phone, write down your pitch and practice saying it until it sounds natural and conversational. If you have the time, it's a good idea to read or watch some of that reporter's work to get a feel for what interests them and how they approach a story, and demonstrate that you're familiar with a journalist's work when you're on the phone. If you have a hard time reaching a journalist on the phone, you can put your pitch in a written memo.

Here's an example of what a short pitch script might look like:

> *Hi, Mark, this is Sheila Jackson from the Community Needs Coalition. I've seen your coverage of affordable housing issues, and I wanted to let you know that the 2010 census will have a big impact on local housing funds. Rev. Susan Schmidt, who you've spoken with in the past, is helping lead a new coalition effort to make sure everybody in our city gets counted, which has a direct effect on grant funding for housing. She'll be speaking at a press conference on Wednesday and would be happy to talk with you about the new campaign. Can I send you some more information? Would you be interested in attending the press conference?*

Be persistent, but polite. Don't be afraid to push a little if a reporter doesn't immediately show interest, but also respect that a reporter may be in the middle of something urgent. Don't take it personally if you get a quick "no". Pitching in the morning is usually best for reporters' schedules.

Keep detailed records of all your conversations with reporters so you can refer to them the next time you're ready to reach out.

Making the Most Your of Interview Opportunities

Stay on message

Always know what you're going to say before talking to a reporter. This means knowing your campaign's messages and practicing them until you can say them easily and naturally. If a reporter asks you a question that seems off-topic, or wants you to comment on something you're not ready to talk about, you don't have to answer their question directly. You can deflect it and get back to one of the main messages you want to get out. Don't worry about being repetitive—repetition is key to getting your message to sink in.

Don't ramble

Keep your sentences short and direct and stop when you've said what you want to say. Some reporters use silence to get you to ramble. Don't be afraid to stop and wait for them to ask the next question.

Reporters will often end an interview with a sort of wrap-up question such as, "Do you have anything else to say?" Use this as an opportunity to repeat your basic message as you'd like it to be used.

Take time if you need it

If a reporter calls with a few questions, it's OK to take a little time to collect your thoughts. You can ask a reporter what kinds of things they want to talk about, and ask if you can call back in a few minutes. Then you can think about your main points, write out a few sentences if it will help you be clear about what you want to say, and then call back. The basic goal is to know what you're going to say before you say it.

Always tell the truth—never fake it

If you give false information to a reporter, you and your campaign will have a hard time regaining credibility. If you're asked about anything that you don't know the answer to, don't make it up. Just say, "I'm not sure about that detail, but I'll find out and get back to you." And then be sure to follow up.

Be friendly, but not a friend

You should assume that anything you say to a reporter could end up in print or on the air. Be careful about a reporter asking casually, "What do you really

think?" kinds of questions after a formal interview seems over. You don't want to create an "interesting" story that would distract from your main message. The same goes for communicating by email. Don't be lulled by informal communication and write something you'd be unhappy to see in a column or blog post.

Holding a Press Conference

You don't have to have a press conference to talk to reporters. If you have information you want to share, you can just send it and follow up with a phone call. You can invite media to cover events where actual campaign activity is taking place, such as a public rally, debate, or canvassing campaign. Only hold a news conference when you are releasing information that is new or important enough to be considered news by reporters, when you can present a great visual (such as a big group of supporters), or you have speakers who by their own position or celebrity will draw reporters to you.

If you decide to hold a press conference:

- Pick a time and location that is convenient for reporters.
- Reserve the room or get any necessary permits for an event on public property.
- Make sure the space is accessible for people with disabilities.
- Email a media advisory a few days before the event.
- Follow up in the days before the event with phone calls "pitching" the event to reporters—practice your pitch so you can quickly and convincingly describe the event, the news, and if appropriate, the good stories and visual images that will be available.
- Think about the visual that your speakers and supporters will present. Will they show the diversity and breadth of your coalition?

Among the basics you might need:

- Podium.
- Sound system, microphones, and an audio mult box for TV or radio reporters.
- Campaign banner or other visual backdrop.
- Water for the speakers.
- Materials that will make it easier for reporters to get the story right: a press release for the event, a short paragraph identifying each of the speakers, written copies of speakers' remarks, and whatever campaign materials or background information that will help explain the issue and the campaign.

Don't let your press conference drag on. You don't want reporters to lose interest or feel like you're wasting their time. Aim for a few speakers (ideally no more than four, with the most well-known or newsworthy speaking last) each talking for a few minutes, so that you get from presentations to reporters' questions in 15 or 20 minutes. It can be challenging to enforce that kind of discipline if you have a large coalition, but it's better to create more speaking opportunities rather than trying to pack too many speakers into one event. Other leaders can stand behind the speakers to create a good image of a campaign with broad support.

Prepare for a press conference by getting agreement in advance on the order of speakers, what topic each will cover, and avoiding repetition. Have a moderator begin with short welcoming remarks, identifying who the speakers are, and describing how the press conference will work. The moderator should also call the press conference to a close after an agreed-upon amount of time or when questions have trailed off.

for pitching

Assume reporters are busy and respect their schedules.
Start a call by asking, "Are you on deadline?" If the answer is yes, ask for a good time to call back. Reporters are more likely to be on deadline and less likely to be able to talk to you in mid- to late afternoon. Morning or early evening calls are a better bet.

Be prepared.
You won't have a lot of time to make your pitch. Practice your delivery so that you can make your points quickly and smoothly. And have background information or detailed data at your fingertips in case the reporter starts asking questions.

Plan to record your own event with a digital video recorder if possible. That way you'll be able to create your own news by putting the event or edited highlights on the website and send it to local bloggers and news outlets. The same goes for taking still photographs.

After the press conference, send the press release and other materials to reporters who did not make it to the event and follow up with phone calls offering them the opportunity to speak with one or more of the speakers.

Holding a Telephone Press Conference

A telephone press conference can be a great alternative to a traditional press conference. Among the benefits of a teleconference: you don't need to find (or rent) a location and get it ready; speakers from different parts of your state can participate without traveling; it's easier for reporters to cover the event while working at their desks; and you can reach out to reporters from a broader area, including other parts of your state or nationally. The main drawback to a teleconference is that you won't get television coverage or an opportunity to make your own videos of the event.

The planning process for a teleconference is much the same as with a traditional press conference:

- Pick your speakers carefully.
- Be sure your speakers are prepared (ideally, your speakers will do a practice run-through of their planned remarks before the call).
- Promote the teleconference with a media advisory followed up with phone calls.
- Record the event for your own use with a digital audio recorder or ask the teleconferencing

People who will be representing your campaign on television should either have experience doing television or be willing to spend some time preparing. At a minimum, practice for a television interview with a video camera (or in front of a mirror) until you feel confident making your main points without stumbling. Some tips for television:

- *Keep your answers short. Practice getting your campaign's primary messages across in short, simple sentences. Include only as much detail as you need to answer the question or get your point across.*
- *Smile! A huge part of how people take in information from television is visual—what you say may leave less of an impression than how you say it. You want to come across as likeable, knowledgeable, comfortable, and enthusiastic about your campaign. A big smile might feel unnatural but it will keep you from coming across as angry or sulking.*
- *Keep your cool if the conversation gets contentious or unpleasant.*
- *Posture and eye contact. If you're standing and talking to a reporter while being filmed by a cameraman, look at and talk to the reporter. If you're in a studio being interviewed by someone in another location, look directly into the camera. If you're seated, don't lean or slump back in your chair: leaning slightly forward will give you much better energy and look better on camera. Keep hand gestures to a minimum, and keep them away from your face.*
- *Dress for success. Wear clothes that are appropriate for the setting. If you're being interviewed on a news program, wear business dress in solid colors. If you're being interviewed in a field setting, it may be appropriate to be dressed more casually. In either case, you don't want flashy patterns, jewelry, or accessories to distract attention from you and your message.*
- *Don't ever assume that the camera or microphone is off.*

service to record it for you and/or provide a transcript. Follow up with reporters who joined the call to see if they have any other questions.

- Contact reporters who don't cover the event and offer to send them copies of the report released or audio files of the presentations.

If you expect just a few participants, you could use a standard conference call number, where everyone calls in and can speak and be heard by others. However, there are real downsides to an open conference call, including background noise from other callers, the disruption of "hold music" if one of the callers puts the conference on hold, and a lack of control over questions. Commercial services can set up moderated calls that give you complete control over the question and answer session.

See the "Organizing Your Community" section of this toolkit for more information on these services.

At the start of the teleconference, you or the operator should welcome the callers and describe the process you'll be using. Identify the speakers and explain the process for taking questions. Ask speakers to introduce themselves as they begin speaking or answering questions. When you are ready to end the call, thank everyone for participating and let reporters know who they should call if they have additional questions. Follow up the same way you would with a regular press conference: send information to those who didn't make it, and ask those who did whether there's anything else they need.

Sample Messages and Talking Points

Major Messages and Talking Points for Census Outreach Campaigns

Our communities have a lot to gain or lose in the 2010 census.
We need to make sure everyone is counted.

- The federal government uses census information to decide where and how to spend almost $400 billion every year on health, education, transportation, and more.
- State governments use census information to decide which communities need money, and what kind of nonprofit services to support.
- Businesses use information to decide where to invest in new factories, distribution centers, and stores.
- Every person who goes uncounted could cost our community thousands of dollars a year. If a lot of people don't get counted, we could lose out on millions that our communities need and deserve. It could make the difference between getting or losing a school, health clinic, senior center, or job training site.
- Census information is also the basis for political representation. Census counts are used to decide how many representatives each state gets in Congress and how those districts are defined. States use the same information to draw legislative districts.
- Communities where people don't get counted will lose political representation and influence to communities where everyone does get counted.

Media Advisory

A media advisory is a document used to invite reporters to cover some kind of event, such as a press conference, forum, or rally. A media advisory should be short and to the point.

The goal of any advisory is to make the event sound interesting, newsworthy, and easy for reporters to quickly figure out the details. Give some thought to the visuals that could make it more appealing for a television reporter or news photographer to cover—and spell them out. You can use a media advisory to let people know about a formal event, like a news conference, or something less formal, like the fact that campaign activists will be working the crowd at a street fair or community event. Here's an example.

Sample Media Advisory for an Event

MEDIA ADVISORY

Community Leaders to Launch 'Make Yourself Count' Campaign
Billions at Stake for X City

With billions of dollars and X City's political representation for the next decade at stake, a group of business, labor, civic, and religious leaders will launch an intensive grassroots campaign to make sure every resident is counted in the 2010 census. City leaders will cut a ceremonial ribbon to launch the campaign.

What: Press conference to launch 'Make Yourself Count' Campaign

Who: Dr. Jane Doe, Community Health Clinic
Bill Smith, Teacher, Eastern High School
Joe Washington, City Labor Council
Rev. Sue Rodriguez, City Ministerial Alliance

When: Tuesday, October 10th at 10:00 a.m.

Where: City Hall steps (rain location—City Hall Room 210)

Why: Launch campaign for 100 percent participation in 2010 census, discuss stakes for city residents in a complete count, and talk about campaign strategies for overcoming challenges to a full count.

For more information, contact Joe Johns at 222-222-2222.

Press Release

A press release is a document that tells the story about an event, report, or news item. One trick to writing a press release is to pretend that you're writing the story you would like to read in the paper the next day. Start with the news that you're making, include quotes from one or more of your spokespeople close to the beginning, and be sure to include the most important messages you want people to hear. You don't have to include every detail. A press release should be short enough (usually one page) for reporters to quickly get your key messages. You can provide more background in a fact sheet or in a conversation.

Sample Press Release for an Event

For Immediate Release
For more information, contact: Joe Johns, 222-222-2222
October 10, 2010
joe@makecitycount.org

Community Leaders Launch Campaign to Make Sure
Every Resident is Counted in 2010 Census

Diverse group of leaders, organizations pledge intense campaign
to protect the city's economic and political interest in a complete count

A diverse coalition of X-City leaders today announced a coordinated campaign to make sure that everyone is counted in the 2010 census. At stake is billions of dollars in resources for X-City communities and fair representation in Congress and the state legislature.

"This is a chance we only get once every 10 years, so let's get it right," said Dr. Jane Doe, director of Community Health Clinic. "We all have a lot to gain by getting a complete count, and a lot to lose if we don't. That's why we're coming together to tell every resident to complete the census form and make themselves count."

Rev. Sue Rodriguez, head of the United for Justice Coalition, said the campaign will work through schools, churches, social service providers, neighborhood associations, and other community groups. She urged residents to see the census as a chance to do something powerful for the health of City families, schools, and neighborhoods.

"Many people don't know how much is riding on the census," said Smith, "We're out to change that. We want everyone to understand that for every person who goes uncounted, we lose political influence in the state capital and Washington, and we lose resources that make a difference in the lives of all of us. Everyone can take a little time to take care of themselves and take care of our community."

The census is carried out every 10 years as required by the U.S. Constitution. The information it gathers about individuals and households is used to determine how many representatives each state gets in Congress and to draw congressional and state legislative district lines. In addition, census data is used to allocate almost $400 billion a year in federal funds and billions more in state funds.

Campaign spokesperson John Washington said the Make it Count campaign will deal head-on with some residents' concerns about giving information about themselves and their families to the census bureau Washington noted that anyone who returns their census form by April 1 will save themselves a phone call or visit from the Census Bureau.

tip on press releases

Approach your release as a reporter would. The fact that your group is putting out a report isn't news—it's what your report has to say. So your headline and opening sentence should not start with "Local group releases new report" but "New report documents urgent need for . . ."

Letters to the Editor

One of the most widely read sections of any newspaper is the page featuring letters to the editor. The letters page is a great way for your campaign to get its message out. Most papers print short letters, so you're better off if you can get your message across in fewer than 200 words. Letters are more likely to be printed if they are responding to an event or a story that ran in the paper.

Keep an eye out for news stories on topics that are relevant to your issue, and respond regularly. For example, with the census:

- If there's a story about people without access to health care, you can point out that federal and state health funds will be distributed to communities based on census figures.
- If there's a story about school funding, or the poor condition of local roads, that gives you an opportunity to point out that funding for key services and infrastructure are based on population figures from the census.

You don't have to complain about coverage to get printed—you can use a letter to the editor to reinforce a good story and get its messages into the paper one more time. Most papers don't want to run a lot of letters from the same person, so encourage different community leaders and advocates to write letters.

Sample Letters to the Editors

To the Editor:

The recent story on cuts to city services ("State budget cuts slam city coffers," January 10) makes it clear why the upcoming census is so important. Every resident who goes uncounted will cost the city thousands of dollars in federal and state funding every year for the next 10 years. If a thousand people go uncounted, we'll lose out on millions of dollars for schools, job training, health care or transportation. There are millions of reasons to fill out your census questionnaire when it comes in the mail this spring, and no good reason not to.

Joe Doe

To the Editor:

Your story about the recession's toll on people without a high school diploma demonstrates the importance of doing everything we can to lower dropout rates and address the inequities that lead to lowered graduation rates that have lasting and damaging effects on communities of color. The Campaign for High School Equity is a national coalition that has identified the most important policy priorities that must be addressed if our high schools are going to change enough to make sure that all young people graduate from high school ready to work, ready for college, and ready to be knowledgeable citizens. It's time for our legislators to make it happen.

Julia Esquivel

Resources

- The Spitfire Strategies Smart Chart for Assessing Communications, from Spitfire Strategies: http://www.spitfirestrategies.com
- Strategic Communications for Nonprofits: A Step-by-Step Guide to Working with the Media, by Kathy Bonk, Emily Tynes, Henry Griggs, and Phil Sparks. Published by the Communications Consortium Media Center: http://www.ccmc.org
- SPIN Works! A Media Guidebook for Communicating Values and Shaping Public Opinion, by Robert Bray, and other publications on communications strategy: http://www.spinproject.org

The Leadership Conference Education Fund

USING NEW MEDIA

New Media is a broad term used to describe the ever-growing array of interactive communications, networking, and organizing activities that take place electronically over digital technologies like the Internet and smart phones. Among the key characteristics of the changing new media environment are democratization and interactivity.

There are fairly low barriers for individuals, organizations, or campaigns to produce and share material and build and engage networks of friends and supporters. And the flow of information is no longer a one-way street from publisher to consumer but a robust and widening sharing of information, opinion, and opportunities for engagement.

New media technologies provide organizations with inexpensive ways to reach out to target audiences as well as to their own networks and the much wider universe of people who read their news, enjoy their entertainment, and conduct their activism online. New media blurs and sometimes erases the lines between what we think of as news outlets and what we think of advocacy, community building, and political organizing.

Social networking sites like Facebook (http://www.facebook.com), Twitter (http://www.twitter.com), Myspace (http://www.myspace.com), Gather (http://www.gather.com) and others provide opportunities to create and build powerful communities of support for your campaign. Facebook, for example, has more than 160 million users in the United States and more than 500 million worldwide. At the end of 2010, Twitter had more than 175 million active users and was growing by millions each month.

The potential impact of new media technologies is immense. The wide availability of digital video, from everything from security cameras to cell phones, has made it easier for law enforcement authorities to identify criminal suspects and seek public assistance in finding them, but has also proven to be a powerful tool that individuals can use to document and expose unacceptable behavior by law enforcement officials and demand accountability. Political protestors in Iran have used Twitter and YouTube to circumvent their government's control of media and to document violent crackdowns on dissent.

Using New Media to Advance Your Campaign

A Campaign Website

Creating a website is an important first step to building an online presence. People who read about your campaign in the newspaper or hear about it from one of their friends can find your website through a search engine and learn more about the campaign. It's a place to post campaign materials, sign up volunteers, give activists steps to take, and solicit financial contributions. The complexity of your website will depend on the size and scope of your campaign, and whether you're using the site to recruit and manage contact with your supporters. The costs of setting up a basic website are pretty minimal. You could even create a campaign page on an existing organizational website.

Some guidelines for an effective website:

- Give some creative thought to your campaign graphics and make sure your home page is attractive, engaging, and very quickly gives people a clear sense of what your campaign is about. Cover the basics: who you are, what your mission and goals are, what kind of activities you're engaged in, and what individuals can do to make a difference.
- Designate someone to update the website regularly with news about the campaign and the issue it is addressing, short notes from the campaign manager, interviews with activists about why they are volunteering, videos taken from campaign events or trainings, etc.
- Make it easy for people to get involved with very clear ways to join the campaign, pledge their support or sign a petition, or report contact with a targeted public official. And don't forget to make it easy for people to donate.

For basic, easy to use, and very affordable website options, check out Weebly at http://www.weebly.com or Tripod at http://www.tripod.lycos.com/site-building. For affordable web hosting, check out http://www.dreamhost.com/hosting.html.

Join the Blogosphere

A blog is generally less formal and more interactive than a website. It's a place where you and your colleagues can share breaking news relevant to your campaign, post updates about events and campaign milestones, interact with volunteers, and generally build enthusiasm for the campaign. It will take someone's time to keep the blog updated, to monitor readers' comments if you set up your site to allow them, and to respond as necessary to comments from supporters or opponents. If you permit readers to post comments, you'll need to have a policy in place to deal with offensive comments. Some sites require users to register to discourage destructive anonymous commenting. You can sign up for a free, easy-to-use blogging platform at http://www.wordpress.com or http://www.blogger.com.

In addition, identify knowledgeable and effective bloggers who are activists on the issue you are working on. Think about reaching out to them in the early stages of your campaign, and invite them to help you plan the online portion of our outreach and organizing strategies. Getting interest and attention from a blogger who already has a significant readership of people interested in your issues can help you make a big splash quickly. You can reach a wide readership much more quickly by getting attention (or writing your own guest post) on a blog with an established audience than by building your own blog audience from scratch.

Create a social network presence

Facebook is the largest social networking site in America. The odds are that many of your own board, staff, coalition partners, and campaign allies are on Facebook and other social networking sites, and you should be too. Think of a campaign page on Facebook as an extension of your website, with an important difference: people won't have to come to your site to get information. Once they've signed us as a member or fan of your campaign, any new information or requests for action that you post will appear on their own pages. If they take an action you recommend, their other friends will find out about it too. With some creative thinking about your messaging you can build a large network of friends and friends of friends. Learn more about Facebook organization pages at http://www.facebook.com/pages/learn.php. Other major social networking sites include: Care2, Change.org, Ning, and Myspace.

Consider taking another step and creating a Twitter account. Twitter takes you one more step into an active conversation with people who are interested in your cause or campaign. You create a Twitter account and let your members and supporters know about it so they can sign up to follow the messages you send out. The most notable feature of Twitter is that the size of your "tweets," or messages, is limited to 140 characters. Your short messages or tweets will reach your followers online or through text messages to their cell phones. Your goal is to build your number of followers and keep them engaged with interesting, entertaining, empowering and up-to-the-minute news about your campaign and calls for urgent action. There's an art to sending out short tweets that grab people's attention, encourage them to "retweet" to their own networks. They can link back to your latest video or call for action.

Tweeting for change

Here are some online tools for effective Twitter advocacy:

For petitions:
http://act.ly/

For following and communicating with members of Congress:
http://tweetcongress.org/

For following and indentifying influential progressive voices on Twitter:
http://tweetprogress.us/

One great feature in Twitter is called a "hashtag". These are used to identify a topic on Twitter to help people follow what others are posting on the topic. Hashtags start with a "#" (hash) sign. For example, people following comprehensive immigration reform will use #CIR as a hashtag and follow messages on that topic at http://hashtags.org/cir. Tools such as http://www.hashtag.org can help you search for and monitor Twitter hashtags. Learn more at http://help.twitter.com/forums/10711/entries/49309 and http://mashable.com/2009/05/17/twitter-hashtags/.

Reaching Out to Online Media

Major newspapers have both websites, which are essentially online versions of the daily paper, and blogs, which give their reporters a chance to write and comment quickly and often more informally about topics they normally cover. Two of the biggest are, not surprisingly, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. But just about any town or city with a local paper will also have an online version.

Reporters are often doing double duty, writing standard news stories for the newspaper and looking for quicker tidbits for the blog. When you reach out to blogs and bloggers who are associated with mainstream journalism outlets—newspapers or magazines—you should treat them as you would other journalists. Introduce yourself and your campaign, encourage them to cover you and consider you a source. Pass along anecdotes, bits of inside information, and other material that might not make it into a straight news story but will help them fill out the blog.

See more about guidelines for talking with and working with members of the media in the "Communicating Effectively" section of this toolkit.

Many blogs that are not affiliated with major news organizations also function at least partially as news organizations, producing or compiling links to other news organizations. But they also include a lot of commentary and provide opportunities for you to reach their audiences by posting op eds or getting one or more of their current contributors to write about your campaign. Huffington Post, a leading site in this category, attracts huge numbers of readers.

Other blogs are organized around political ideologies or specific issues. One of the best-known progressive political blogs is http://www.dailykos.com, a website where people can read, comment, and debate on the news of the day and follow a dizzying number of comment streams. Daily Kos has "spun off" other blogs devoted to specific topic areas. Whatever issue you are focused on, there are almost certainly some major blogs, some associated with advocacy organizations and others run by individual activists. There are well-read blogs focusing on communities of color, people with disabilities, LGBT advocacy and politics, and more. Many state capitals and other urban areas have influential blogs covering state and local politics and community affairs. Among their readers will be people you are trying to influence: journalists, public officials, and people who work for public officials or government agencies. Get to know blogs relevant to your campaign. Contact the editor(s) to see if you can post a guest blog or become a regular contributor. Reach out to contributors who seem to attract a lot of readers and commenters. Add your own comments to relevant posts.

Advertise Online

Many public education and advocacy campaigns don't have big advertising budgets with the ability to buy ads in big newspapers or on local television and radio. But you might be able to afford targeted online advertising strategies. It is possible to target online advertising in an extremely focused way to people who are searching for information about your issue, to websites that attract members of your target audience, or even directly to the personal pages of people on social networks such as Facebook.

One of the simplest forms of advertising is Google's Adwords. This program allows you to have a sponsored link appear when someone searches for topics related to your campaign. The cost of the ad will vary, and Google gives you a lot of flexibility in limiting your overall spending. You can also target ads to users of Google's email system. Google also has a grant program that provides free online advertising for qualified 501(c)(3) organizations. Find out more at http://www.google.com/nonprofits/grantstutorial.html.

New Possibilities

The constantly changing world of new media offers new ways to educate and energize activists, identify and recruit new supporters, create visibility for your campaign, and potentially reach huge audiences at little cost. In addition, the interactive nature of

blogs and social networks can help you benefit from the ideas and enthusiasm of supporters who take their own responsibility for spreading your message. And that can help you create a longer and stronger connection with individuals and a more powerful personal commitment to your campaign.

If new media is a new world for you, try not to be intimidated. Find colleagues or volunteers who live and breathe this world and tap into their expertise. Look for opportunities to recruit student interns who have grown up in the online world. And take advantage of online websites and discussion boards that can help you understand how to make new media work for you. The following resources can get you started.

thinking outside the box:

In February 2010, the political magazine "Campaigns & Elections" described a creative and effective use of online advertising to support an organizing campaign. A group of immigration reform advocates wanted to challenge CNN about the strident anti-immigrant rhetoric of one of its hosts, Lou Dobbs. The advocates created a hard-hitting ad and sought to buy time for it on CNN, fully expecting that the network would reject the ad. After publicizing the rejection, they worked to create more buzz by running a set of provocative ads on Facebook targeted specifically to employees at CNN and other news outlets. To CNN employees, it felt like a huge buy, but it cost a tiny fraction of what it would have cost to place an ad on the network. The campaign strategists also ran the Facebook ads targeting progressives and Latinos with a fundraising ask, and the ads quickly paid for themselves. With some data in hand about which ads were more effective, they bought banner ads on political blogs followed by reporters. The coverage they received soon made their campaign the top result for people who searched Google for the phrase "Lou Dobbs." The campaign culminated in Dobbs' resignation.

New Media Resources

- The New Organizing Institute runs a progressive advocacy and campaign training program focused on cutting-edge online organizing techniques (e.g. writing effective emails, engaging bloggers, leveraging social networks, utilizing video), political technology (e.g. using data effectively, progressive technology infrastructure), and the intersection with field and management of these areas of new organizing. You can read its Encyclopedia of New Organizing, watch previously recorded webinars online, and sign up for activist gatherings and trainings such as its Rootscamp, an interactive "unconference" where participants create the agenda and share their own successful stories and strategies:
  http://www.neworganizing.com
- The Case Foundation's "Gear up for Giving" project includes links to free tutorials about social media strategy, blogging, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and more:
  http://www.casefoundation.org/social-media-tutorials
- The article "Dissecting the craft of online political advocacy" can be found at:
  http://www.epolitics.com
- K Street Café is a blog where experts from a variety of backgrounds share new and novel ways technology, the Internet and social media are being used to shape public policies:
  http://www.kstreetcafe.com
- Frogloop is a blog about social networking and online organizing for nonprofit organizations sponsored by Care2. It also has tips about using social networks and tracking their effectiveness:
  http://www.frogloop.com/
- Companies such as Democracy in Action offer a package of tools for managing building an email list, creating advocacy alerts & petitions, and collecting donations:
  http://salsalabs.com/democracyinaction
- Network for Good also has some free tools for online fundraising:
  http://www1.networkforgood.org/
- Google for Nonprofits is also a good resource for online tools:
  http://www.google.com/nonprofits/
- EchoDitto is a new media firm that provides some free advice on best practices:
  http://www.echoditto.com/best/organizing
- Here's an article about how one progressive religious campaign, Standing on the Side of Love, used social media in its campaigns to support LGBT equality and immigration reform:
  http://krausnotes.com/2010/04/10/finding-faith-a-look-at-the-standing-on-the-side-of-love-campaign/
- Epolitics has specific sections on the use of different social networks like Facebook and Myspace:
  http://www.epolitics.com
- Frogloop is a blog about social networking and online organizing for nonprofit organizations sponsored by Care2. It also has tips about using social networks and tracking their effectiveness:
  http://www.frogloop.com/
- M&R Strategic Services is a communications consulting firm that helps nonprofits use online tools. You can find a set of case studies and articles at:
  http://www.mrss.com/publications.html

The Leadership Conference Education Fund

EDUCATING AND ENGAGING PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Policymakers, opinion leaders, and other public officials are some of the most important audiences for many public education and advocacy campaigns. State legislators, governors, members of Congress, and state and national executive branch officials have the ability to make and shape policies that have a huge impact on people's lives. Think, for example, of the number of lives that have been saved by the public education campaigns waged over the years to combat drunk driving. By shaping public opinion and by encouraging legislators to take action to discourage underage drinking and driving under the influence, advocates have brought about significant cultural and legal changes.

It is entirely appropriate and legitimate for nonprofit organizations as well as individuals to meet with public officials to educate them on issues, provide them with information about organizational priorities, and answer questions from elected officials and staff. And if you aren't pushing for passage of any particular piece of legislation, it doesn't count as lobbying and shouldn't raise any concerns for your board or supporters. In fact, it's good for your organization and its profile to be seen as a useful and credible source of expert information.

Also, it's entirely appropriate for tax-exempt nonprofit organizations to engage in a certain amount of legislative advocacy—or lobbying for passage of a particular piece of legislation. There are plenty of good resources to help you figure out the best ways to engage in legislative advocacy while knowing the legal limits. Among them are:

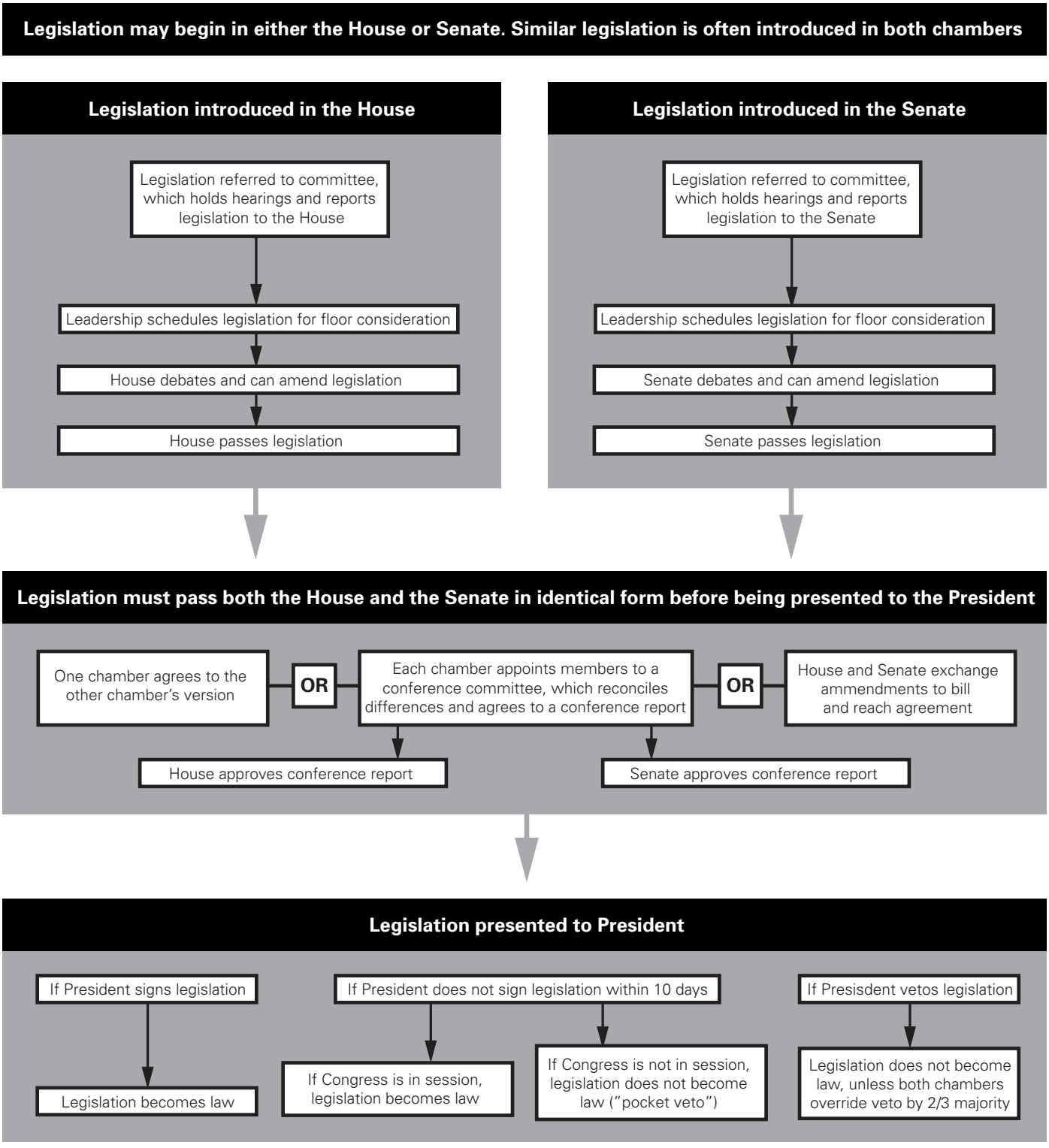
- The Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest, http://www.clpi.org, has a wealth of information available, including *Make a Difference for Your Cause: Strategies for Nonprofit Engagement in Legislative Advocacy*.
- The Alliance for Justice educates and trains nonprofit organizations about how to legally be effective advocates for those who are often left out of the policy making process. Get more information at www.afj.org/for-nonprofits-foundations/about-advocacy/.

be heard!

Some people who work for, serve on the boards of, or volunteer for local nonprofit organizations, are wary of getting involved with advocacy campaigns. They might be worried that campaigns to educate elected officials might appear partisan and damage existing relationships. Or they might worry about crossing some legal line that could threaten their institution's tax-exempt status. There are good answers to these concerns. Don't let them prevent you from getting your message heard. If your voice isn't heard when public officials are considering action on issues important to you and your community, you'll miss out on a chance to influence their decisions.

Understand the Legislative Process

It is important to know how the legislative process works and track the progress of legislation you are interested in.



Educating Public Officials

Individual Meetings with Legislators and/or Staff

Most members of Congress and state legislators are happy to schedule meetings with constituents. Call the local office to find out when your elected official will be in town and ask for a meeting. You can request a meeting when the member of Congress is home for the weekend—Fridays and Mondays are often good days to find them in-district—or during a longer congressional recess. Their calendars can fill up quickly, so don't be surprised if it takes time to get a meeting scheduled.

If you are trying to set up a meeting on behalf of a local coalition or group of leaders, be sure to let the scheduler know how many people you expect to attend. Ideally it should be a relatively small group representing a diversity of constituent groups and interests. You may be able to get a meeting sooner—or with a higher ranking staff member—if you note in your request that a particularly well-regarded member of the community will be attending.

National organizations and coalitions will often bring local members or affiliate staff to Washington, D.C., to meet with members of Congress or their staff. Keep in mind that the congressional schedule is frequently changing, and you may end up meeting with staff rather than the legislator. However this should not be thought of as a lost opportunity. Staff members who work on your issue can be effective in conveying your concerns to the legislator. And staff members often have more time to spend listening to your views.

Be aware that it can be frustrating to deal with staff at very busy legislative offices, and they may seem brusque or impatient with you. Remember that they are often operating under stressful situations. They're likely to remember you favorably if you show them patience, respect, and understanding of their situation while making a request or advocating for your position.

Briefing a Group of Staff

You may also be able reach a larger number of congressional or state legislative offices at once with a staff briefing. A staff briefing can be a good way to share the contents of polling or other research, discuss a new report, or talk about the formation of a new coalition and its plans. It can be particularly useful when you have a prominent speaker, like a pollster or issue expert who would not have time to visit numerous offices with you. Start with the office of a legislator who is friendly to your cause; a staff member can help you reserve a room in the Capitol or a legislative office building and should be able to help you reach out to relevant staff in other offices. Be sure to have plenty of materials. Make your presentation brief to encourage questions and conversation. Have a sign-in list so that you can follow up individually with everyone who attends.

Presenting Testimony

Presenting testimony at a congressional or legislative hearing is an extremely good opportunity to make your case to legislators, establish credibility as an expert voice on an issue, and raise the visibility of your organization or campaign. Hearings don't have to be about the pros and cons of a specific piece of legislation; they can be organized to explore an important issue or examine options for dealing with a problem. Encourage friendly legislators on committees relevant to your issue or campaign to plan hearings and invite your campaign's spokesperson(s) to present testimony. Be sure that you, or anyone who is providing testimony, knows your issue in enough depth to anticipate opposing viewpoints or hostile questions and prepare answers in advance. Practice, practice, practice.

Calls, Letters, and Emails

Generating large numbers of calls, emails, or letters into legislators' offices can be an important and effective organizing strategy. Follow the legislative process carefully to know when key legislators need to hear from your supporters. Generate calls or emails through your own newsletter, e-mail list, or through volunteer phone banks.

Congressional offices receive a large volume of communications, especially on controversial issues or legislation. And they pay attention to the number of calls or other contacts as a way to gauge the intensity of their constituents' interests on different sides of an issue.

As you would expect, thoughtful individual letters will have a much greater impact than a form letter or pre-printed postcard. If you're able to get a number of community leaders to write their own letters explaining why your issue or campaign is important to them, that message will be heard. You can also gather multiple signatures on a single letter. A sign-on letter can be useful in demonstrating the breadth

and diversity of support for your proposal or issue campaign and in generating media interest. You might even consider multiple sign-on letters, such as one from business leaders, one from religious leaders, one from educators, etc.

Unless you have a strong personal relationship with your legislator, you aren't likely to get through on a phone call, but it's worth asking. If you can't reach the legislator directly, ask to speak with the staff member who works on the issue you're calling about. If you are calling about a specific piece of legislation, especially if it's controversial, the person answering the phone may be getting a lot of calls and may simply take your position to tally it one way or the other.

Sample Sign-on Letter to Congress

July __, 2011

Senator _____

XXX _____

Washington, D.C., 20510

Re: The ADA Amendments Act of 2008 State Purpose, i.e. bill you are addressing

Dear Senator _____,

Who you are as a coalition: The undersigned groups, representing a broad scope of business, disability, civil rights, faith-related, veterans and other interests, write in support of the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (H.R. 3195).

What the bill does and why it is important: The ADA Amendments Act maintains the individual functionality that entities covered under the law, including employers and public accommodations, deem so necessary for the effective administration of this law, while still providing important protection for individuals with disabilities. In essence, this bill strikes a delicate balance between the needs of individuals with disabilities and the realities experienced by entities covered under the law, including employers and public accommodations.

Request for support: As you know, the bill recently passed the House by a vote of 402 to 17. The proposed legislation has now moved to the Senate for consideration. We urge your support in making enactment of the ADA Amendments Act this year a reality and we stand ready to work with you towards that end.

Sincerely,

Name of Organization/Leader List all of the organizations who support the statement.

_xxxx, the President, org____ You can also include the leader of the organization.

Meeting with Your Elected Officials:

Prepare in Advance:

- Find out if the legislator has recently been in the media, and for what reason(s). That may tell you something about his or her current priorities.
- Do enough research to understand the legislator's interests, positions, and voting record on the issue you are advocating for. Has your legislature made a comment on the issue?
- If you are there to talk about a specific bill, be sure you know its current legislative status. Has it been introduced? Who supports it? Is it likely to be voted on soon?
- Anticipate the kinds of questions or concerns that will be raised and have clear answers ready. It's especially important to anticipate what opponents of your campaign or issue would say to the same legislator or staff member.
- Know your message. Practice making your case clearly and quickly. If it's a busy day, your meeting may last as few as 10 minutes. If there are several of you, work out in advance who will speak first and what they will address. Don't waste people's time with long or repetitive presentations. Not everyone may be able to speak.
- Prepare materials to leave behind with the legislator or staff, such as fact sheets or a memo summarizing your positions.

Make the Visit Count:

- Introduce yourself and start on a positive note. Is there a recent vote or public statement with for which you can start by saying thanks?
- State your positions, concerns, or requests clearly and directly. Bolster your facts with personal stories about how the issue affects the legislator's constituents and district.
- If you don't understand your legislator's opinion or the legislative status of an issue, ask for an explanation.
- If you're not sure how to answer, say so honestly, promise to get the information quickly, and then be sure to follow through.
- Leave several copies of your materials and contact information for yourself and your coalition members.
- Be sure to thank the legislator and staff for spending time with you.

Following Up:

- Be sure to write or call legislators and staff after the visit to thank them for their time.
- If they agreed to take any actions, remind and thank them—and offer your assistance if appropriate.
- If you promised to get them any additional information or answers to questions, do so promptly.
- Be sure to share any information or insights you gained from the meeting with your colleagues and coalition members and decide together if any additional follow-up is needed.
- Maintain a relationship with people you met with by sending them updates on your activities.

Calling Your Member of Congress

It's most effective to call your own senators and representatives. But there may be times when calls to congressional leadership are also important. Therefore, there may be times when you are asked to reach out to constituents in key states to encourage them to call their member of Congress. You can reach any congressional office by calling the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121 and asking the operator to be transferred to the office you are trying to reach. Tell the person who answers the phone why you are calling and what issue you are calling about. You may be able to speak directly with your senator or representative, but it's most likely that you'll speak to a staff person who deals with the issue you are concerned about. If an office is being flooded with calls for and against a particular piece of legislation, the person answering the phone may simply tally your position.

The Leadership Conference Education Fund

MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN

We hope you found this toolkit helpful. It's been designed to give you both a big-picture approach to planning a public education or advocacy campaign and specific suggestions for putting your organizing and communication plans into action.

No matter how well you create a plan, or how well you execute it, you'll need to stay flexible. You may have to adjust your strategy if there's a major shift in the political climate you're working in. You may need to revise your workplan if you don't raise quite enough money to do everything you had wanted to do—or if you raise more than you expected. You may come up against unanticipated obstacles—or unanticipated allies who bring new perspectives and resources to the campaign. You may decide one part of your strategy isn't working so well and needs to be reconsidered. In other words, make adjustments and course corrections as needed, but keep your eye on your goal, and hold yourself and your campaign colleagues accountable to commitments you have made to each other.

Some campaigns will be like a sprint, with an intense focus on a short-term goal. But more often, changing public attitudes and public policies is a long-distance race that requires planning, training, stamina, and teamwork.

We encourage you to let us know whether this information is useful—and what other kinds of information you would like.

And we would love to hear and share success stories from your own campaigns. Get in touch with us at grassroots@civilrights.org.

Make change happen!

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The Leadership Conference Education Fund

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